

No. 1181

NEW YORK, MAY 18, 1928

Price 8 Cents

FAME AND FORTUNE

STORIES OF BOYS

WEEKLY.

WHO MAKE MONEY.

UP TO HIM;

OR, RUNNING HIS FATHER'S BUSINESS.

By A SELF-MADE MAN.



The screams of the two girls attracted Tom's attention. He rushed out of the store in time to see one of the kidnapers pick up little Daisy. "Drop her, you rascal!" he cried, darting forward, but the man's companion blocked him.

FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

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UP TO HIM

OR, RUNNING HIS FATHER'S BUSINESS

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.—Tom Nugent and His Friend Ed.

"Say, Tom, I hear you're going to run the store," said Ed Watts, stopping at the gate of the pretty Nugent cottage and looking over the white paling at his friend and schoolmate, Tom Nugent, who was watering the little lawn and the rose bushes and other plants with a hose sprinkler.

"Hello, Ed; glad to see you. In answer to your question I will say that you heard right. I'm going to tackle the business," replied Tom, who was a good-looking, stalwart and manly boy, and quite popular among a large circle of acquaintances.

"Do you think you can make it go?"

"It's up to me to do so for mother's sake as well as my own."

"It's quite an undertaking, I should think."

"A fellow can't go to sleep over such an enterprise and expect it to pan out," said Tom.

"I should say not. That little grocery store I opened up two blocks below here takes all my time and energy. If it wasn't for the help my sister gives me I don't think I could get along. I didn't think, when I opened up the business, that it would give me half the trouble I'm up against. I've been running it now just two weeks, and lord, sometimes I wish I hadn't started it, but gone to work for somebody else."

"I suppose you thought that as soon as you opened your doors the customers would flock right in, and all you'd have to do would be to wait on them and pocket the cash. Now you find that you have to hustle for trade."

"That's right, and carry the goods around myself, and get orders, because I can't afford to hire a boy to do it for me," said Ed. "Your mother is one of my best customers. If she and two or three others you got for me, Tom, and I sha'n't forget your kindness, suddenly quit me. I'd have to shut up and go into bankruptcy."

"You do the right thing by your customers and they won't quit you. I won't have things any easier than you, though our store is an established institution. Things have been slack in our line for over a year, and father didn't more than pay his expenses during that time. My father didn't have a very big life insurance, and the company hasn't paid up yet, so that altogether we're not flush with cash."

"It's a wonder your mother didn't try to sell the store."

"She did try. Quite a number of would-be purchasers made offers for it, but none of them was willing to give anything like what I figured the business and stock in trade is worth. Everybody seems to think that it's the proper thing to take advantage of a woman—to do her, in fact—and when that woman is a widow they look upon her as a fair mark. Well, I don't propose that my late father's business shall be sacrificed. After thinking the matter over, and then talking it over with mother, I persuaded her to let me step into my father's shoes and get on the job."

"I wish you success. Who's been running it for your mother?"

"Mr. Grafton, the bookkeeper. When I take full charge on Monday, the first thing I shall do will be to ship him."

"Ship the bookkeeper! How can you get on without him? He's been in the store a long time, all of ten years, I guess, and ought to know the business from A to Z. I should think he'd be just the man to help you out."

"I know it. He'd help me out—of the business altogether."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"I mean that Mr. Grafton is not the kind of man I want around. Since he's been running the store for mother he's been working for his own interests more than hers."

"He has?"

"Yes; he's a sneak. He kept straight under my father, because he didn't dare do otherwise. But since he's been in charge he's been running things to the ground."

"Why should he do that?"

"To discourage my mother with the view, no doubt, of buying the store out cheap himself. I dare say he represented things to the people who wanted to purchase so as to queer their offers and prevent them from getting the store."

"Have you any proof of that?"

"Yes, I have proof or I wouldn't say so. I have proof, too, of his general duplicity. He's a snake in the grass, and has overreached himself. Instead of gaining anything by his crooked work, he'll lose his job."

"If he's that kind of a man he'll probably try to get back at you."

"I'll keep my eye out for him. If I catch him

trying any funny work I'll put him in jail," said Tom, with a resolute look.

"I hope you won't have any trouble, Tom. I'd like to see you get on."

"Thanks, Ed, I believe you. We've been friends for a good many years and I've never seen a yellow streak in you."

"And you never will," said Ed, earnestly. "You've helped me a lot to get started in my store, and I sha'n't forget it whether I succeed or not. If I can do anything to help you, call on me, and I'll do it if I can."

"I hope I sha'n't need any aid from you, for you have enough to do to keep your own head above water. It is no silly thing to start a new business on the small capital you have invested. You must hustle early and late. It is fortunate you have such a good sister to help you out."

"Bet your life it is. She's the real thing. No gilt gingerbread about her. I can depend on her all the time."

"By and by she'll get married and then you'll lose her," laughed Tom.

"I'm not worrying about that. She hasn't got a beau yet."

"You can't tell how soon she may get one."

"Then I'll get married and have my wife to take her place."

"Are you still sweet on Nellie Gray?"

"Sure. She's a fine girl."

"Are you thinking of marrying her one of these days?"

"Yes, if I don't find anybody else I like better."

"She wouldn't feel complimented if she heard you say that."

"Ho! She'll be lucky if she gets a fellow like me with a growing store."

"She might have a different opinion. She might find somebody without a growing store whom she liked better than you, and marry him instead of you."

"Then she'd be a fool. I consider myself a good thing for any girl."

"You've got a pretty good opinion of yourself, haven't you?" laughed Tom.

At that moment around the corner of the street came a curious-looking old woman. She had a dark, sunburned complexion, piercing black eyes, and a strange manner.

"Oh, my!" exclaimed Ed, as soon as his eyes lighted on her. "That witch here! I feel myself bewitched already."

"What's the matter?" asked Tom.

The newcomer heard Ed's remark and flashed an unpleasant glance upon him.

"That's the way with all," she said, in a hopeless tone, as she leaned wearily on the paling for support. "My misery drives all against me. Because want and misery have marked my features I am left to starve."

"Not at all, my good woman," said Tom, looking at her with sympathy in his eyes. "If you are in want, and you look it, I will do what I can for you."

"Don't speak to her, Tom, or she'll do you," said Ed, edging away from the stranger. "She came into my store about noon begging, and because I wouldn't give her anything—I was busy waiting on a customer at the time—she cursed my figs, and I haven't sold one since."

Tom paid no attention to Ed's remark. He opened the gate and said:

"Come in, my good woman. You look faint and tired. You shall rest yourself in our kitchen, and my mother will give you some bread and meat, and a glass of milk. It will do you good."

"Thanks—thanks, young sir. Heaven bless you! I see you have a charitable heart," said the woman, looking at him gratefully. "I may be able, poor as I am, to require you some day. Bread thrown upon the water shall after many days return a hundredfold."

Tom took her by the arm and led her faltering steps up the shell walk and around to the back of the house. Ed looked after them.

"Lord, to think she should bless him, and all she did for me was to curse my figs because I couldn't let her help herself. If I let every tramp sample my stock in trade where would I fetch up at? Well, he can afford to give her something to eat and drink and not miss it, but I can't afford to give anything away except to a person who looks deserving, and she certainly does not. If she was half way decent she wouldn't have cursed my figs. Maybe they'll be a dead loss on my hands now?"

Then Ed went off growling to himself over what he considered his hard luck.

CHAPTER II.—The Seeress.

Tom left the strange woman with his mother and the young girl who acted in the capacity of maid-of-all-work for the little household, and returned to the garden to finish his work.

She was still there when he carried the hose back and put it in the shed. Tom entered the kitchen and found that she had satisfied her hunger and was telling the servant her fortune by the palm of one of her hands. She looked earnestly at the boy as he went to a closet to get something.

"Will you let me tell you your fortune?" she said.

"My fortune!" laughed Tom. "The past I know, the present I'm not worried about, and as for the future, that can take care of itself. Whatever is to happen to me will happen without reference to what you might tell me."

"Not always," said the gypsy-looking woman. "Forewarned is forearmed. When danger threatens it is well to know whence to expect it, and how to meet it. With this knowledge one may often ward off misfortune that otherwise would overwhelm him. Pray let me look at your palm, the left one. You have done me a kind turn—one that shows your heart to be as good as your face. I wish to see in what way I can return the favor. Perhaps your hand can tell me. If it does not you are more fortunate than most mortals, for from our birth to the grave peril surrounds us if it does not actually touch all of us."

There was something in the woman's manner, or her words, that induced the boy to comply with her wish. It seemed as if some subtle power compelled him to yield to her request. So he held out his hand and she took it in hers, peering into it as to a mirror in which she saw something invisible to others.

"Your past," she said, "has been sunshiny, but the clouds are beginning to gather. You

are about to make a change, to assume responsibilities to which heretofore you have been a stranger. You have an enemy, a dark-looking man, who will try to down you at every turn. Beware of him."

Tom did not know he had an enemy in the world, and was about to laugh at her statement when across his mind flashed a mental photograph of Richard Grafton, his late father's book-keeper. He was a dark-looking man, and would assuredly have no kindly feelings toward him when discharged from the store on Monday.

"Will this dark-looking man give me a great deal of trouble?" he asked the woman.

"He will. At this moment he has designs against you."

"He's starting in early," thought Tom. "He knows that I am going to take charge of the business next week, and he probably looks upon me as an easy mark because I'm a boy. No doubt he'd do me up in time if I left him in charge of the books and the financial end, but if he is counting on that he'll get a rude jolt. I wouldn't have him around the store if I could get him for nothing. He has already robbed mother, one way or another, and I don't mean to give him the chance to rob me."

"You will have a hard struggle in your new line of action," went on the gypsy woman, "but the indications are that you will come out ahead in the end. There are other complications outside of that you will be brought face to face with. They have a bearing on your line of fate and may not be avoided. They will surely happen, but fear not, you will triumph over them. Your life will be in danger shortly, but will not die, for the indications all point otherwise."

"In what way will my life be threatened?"

"I cannot say exactly, but a dark man will be the cause of it."

"A dark man!" exclaimed Tom, thinking of Grafton.

"A woman will be the cause of much trouble to you."

"A woman!"

"Perhaps a girl—at any rate she is very close to you, and will wield a great influence over your future, so I judge she is a sweetheart."

"You're wrong there, for I haven't got a sweetheart."

"Then you shortly will have one, since it is so written in your hand."

"I can't imagine who she will be. I know lots of girls, but have no special interest in any of them."

"Then she is still a stranger to you. She is light, with golden hair and blue eyes."

"How in thunder can you tell that?"

"Do you want a clearer knowledge of the future?" said the woman, looking searchingly into his face.

"I doubt your ability to read it," replied Tom, half defiantly.

"Girl," the gypsy said, sharply to the house-maid, "hand me that ink bottle."

The maid took it off the shelf and gave it to her.

"Hold your hand steady," she said to the boy.

Removing the stopper she poured a large drop of ink into his palm.

Muttering some indistinct words as she grasped his fingers, she suddenly became motionless as a

statue, staring at the ink. Tom, impressed by her actions, gazed at the ink as if expecting some change to take place in it. To him, however, it remained just what it was—a drop of ink. The gypsy appeared to regard it as a black mirror in which her eyes saw what was not revealed to others. Three pictures of future events she described with great accuracy to Tom. The boy was rather staggered by some details, in one which he knew to be true, and that lent an air of credence to what he otherwise would have laughed at. What she told Tom we will not now disclose—the story will do that as it unrolls before the reader. That the gypsy told nothing but the truth the sequel will show, but she did not tell all that was to happen to the boy, for she did not attempt to draw the veil further than the point reached by the third picture; nor could she tell what lay between the events her mystic powers had evolved from the drop of the ink. The girl who was to figure so prominently in Tom's life she described with as much accuracy as though looking at her photograph, and the boy was rather pleased to hear that she was uncommonly pretty and accomplished. The third picture was a thrilling one, but when the woman reached the most critical point of it the sudden appearance of Mrs. Nugent caused Tom to move his hand so that the ink drop rolled off on to the floor, and that brought his fortune-telling seance to an abrupt conclusion.

"She's been telling my fortune, mother," said Tom, in some little confusion, for he was a bit ashamed of having yielded to the temptation of such a thing.

His mother smiled indulgently. She did not put any great faith in such things, although when a girl she had had her fortune told several times, and the chief prediction had subsequently come out true.

"Shall I read your hand, madam?" asked the seeress.

"No, my good woman. I have lost all interest in such things."

The woman rose from her seat.

"I am grateful to you and your son for your charity and kindness," she said. "Some day not far hence the fates have decreed that I shall be able to return it in a way you least suspect."

Mrs. Nugent smiled in an incredulous way, as if she doubted that the seeress would ever be able to do either her or her son a favor. The woman walked to the kitchen door, apparently much refreshed by the rest and the food, and waving her arm said, "Farewell," and passed out of the house. Tom looked after her with an unusually earnest and thoughtful look on his face, for the things she had told him impressed him more than he was willing to admit.

CHAPTER III.—The Crooked Book-keeper.

On Monday morning Tom Nugent entered the hardware store, established by his father, with a resolute expression on his face. He knew he had an unpleasant duty to perform, but he never thought of receding from the performance of it. The store was in the business section of the seaport town of Barport, about half a mile from the cottage. He walked into his late father's

private office at the rear of the counting-room, took his seat and opened the desk. Richard Grafton, the book-keeper, had not yet arrived, although he should have been on hand at about eight o'clock, and it was now nearly nine. In the store, Bob Jones, an old salesman, who had been with the establishment since it was started some twenty years before, was waiting on a customer. Billy White, the lad of all work, was dusting the back shelves. Both were stanch to the Nugent interests, and Tom knew he could thoroughly depend on them. Fifteen minutes later Grafton walked in with a cigar in his mouth. His manner would have indicated that he owned the store. As he was about to take off his hat Tom called out to him.

"Good mornin'," he said, a bit superciliously as he poked his head in at the doorway of the inner office.

"I'd like to see you, Mr. Grafton," returned Tom.

The book-keeper walked in and looked at the lad inquiringly.

"Sit down," said Tom.

Grafton took a chair beside the desk.

"I think you've been connected with the store about ten years," said Tom.

"I guess so," replied the book-keeper, carelessly.

"You've been book-keeping something like five years?"

"Yes."

"You understand the business pretty thoroughly, I judge."

"I flatter myself I've got it down fine. I suppose you want me to give you all the points?"

"You've been practically in charge since my father died. My mother depended on you to run the store in her interests."

"Which I have done," replied Grafton, complacently.

"Excuse me, but we differ on that point," replied Tom, calmly.

"Eh? What's that?"

"In view of certain facts that I have discovered you seem to have been running the store more in your interests than my mother's."

Grafton glared at Tom.

"Do you assert that I haven't been doing the right thing?" he said.

"I regret to say that I do."

"Then I say it's a lie," replied the book-keeper, angrily.

"Excuse me, it is not a lie. On the 18th of last month, while Mr. Jones was at home to dinner, you sold and delivered a bill of hardware to the amount of \$20 to Morton & Brand, contractors. The salesbook shows no entry of the transaction. Neither has it been entered in either the day-book or the ledger. A week ago you personally collected that sum of Morton & Brand, giving them a receipted bill for the money, and the cash-book shows no entry of the matter. Perhaps you can explain all this. If you can I will listen to you."

Grafton was taken all aback, and his face became as red as a beet.

"I guess you're mistaken about there being no entry of that transaction, or the cash."

"If I'm mistaken you'd better get the books and point it out. I could not find the transaction mentioned in any of them."

"Well, you haven't seen the books. They're in the safe. How can you assert that the matter in question is not properly entered?"

"I have seen the books, Mr. Grafton."

"When?"

"Every evening during the past week."

"Every evening? Have you got the combination of the safe?"

"I have. Do you know of any reason why I shouldn't have it?"

"Where did you get it?"

"I found the combination in a drawer of my father's desk at home."

"But that is the old combination."

"So I discovered when I tried to open the safe. You altered it to a new one without saying anything to my mother about it."

"I had a right to do that. And it wasn't necessary that I should inform your mother of the fact, as she had nothing to do with the office safe."

"I'm not questioning your right to alter the combination if you saw fit to do so, but as my mother is executrix of my father's will, it was right that she should know the new combination in case she wished to get something out of the safe when you were not here."

"I'm always here during business hours, except at my dinner hour."

"When I found that I could not get into the safe I looked in the drawers of your desk to see if you had written down the new combination."

"How did you get in the drawers?" asked Grafton, with an ugly look.

"I got the locksmith down the block to open them for me."

"Oh, you did? Why didn't you ask me for the combination if you wanted it so badly?" sneered the book-keeper.

"Because I thought the old combination would fill the bill. When I found it wouldn't you were not here to help me out. Well, I discovered the new combination on a slip of paper in one of your drawers, and so I got into the safe and secured the books, which, as I was about to take charge here, I felt it my duty to examine in order to familiarize myself with the run of business. The transaction I have just mentioned is not the only irregular one that has happened since you have been in charge, Mr. Grafton. At least \$250 have been taken in of which you have neither made no mention or have altered the entries so as to cover up the shortage."

"Do you mean to say that I have taken money that belonged to the store?" snorted the book-keeper.

"The indications are that you have."

"It's a lie!" roared Grafton.

"I have a list here of the shortage, made up with the help of Mr. Jones, and some of our customers. If you can account for it I shall be glad to have you do so."

"Let me see it."

Tom handed him the list. The book-keeper recognized many of the items as sums he had deliberately embezzled. The others he could not recollect. There was enough to show him that he was caught with the goods, as the saying is, and he wondered how the boy had been able to discover the evidences of his faithlessness. He thought he had covered his tracks so cleverly that discovery was improbable. Tom, however, had

had but little trouble in running his crooked acts down. He was a shrewd boy, to begin with, and also a good practical book-keeper, though he had actually had no experience in the business. The sale to Morton & Brand had first put him up to Grafton's methods. He had discovered it by accident. Mr. Morton, with whom he was personally acquainted, having incidentally mentioned the purchase. A part of the goods happened to be a new style of door handle that the Nugent store had only lately taken hold of. Tom supposed that Jones had sold the order, and casually asked him about it when he next was in the store. Jones said that he had only sold one order of six, for cash, to a man named Scott. The stock was examined and a half dozen were found to have been sold. Billy White was asked if he had sold any, but he hadn't. The inference, then, was that Grafton had sold them. The sales book was consulted by Tom, and to his surprise the order sold to Morton and Brand was not even mentioned. Tom then went over to the contractors and asked to see the bill of the goods. Then he learned that Grafton had called and collected it in person the day before, a little ahead of time, giving as his excuse that the store was short of cash to pay a large bill that had come due. This caused Tom to investigate the whole matter on the quiet, and the result caused him to go over the books at night after the book-keeper had left. He found enough irregularities on the part of Grafton to convince him that the man was robbing the store right along. He made a list of all of these stealings, and that list Grafton now held in his hands. Tom waited patiently for him to say something. The book-keeper after looking the items over, tried to frame up some excuse to let himself out of a bad box, but nothing reasonable presented itself. He was caught, and must either own up or try and bluff it out.

"I don't understand this charge you have made against me," he said. "I don't know anything about these items. There must be a mistake. I haven't taken a cent that doesn't belong to me."

"What have you done with all this money then, and why did you omit some entries that ought to appear on the books and falsify others?" asked Tom.

"I deny I omitted anything, or that I falsified anything."

"The proof is in the books. We will go into the counting-room and run over them together," said Tom.

"What's the use? You've got it into your head that I've done some crooked things, and no evidence will convince you otherwise."

"My investigation has been very careful. I have given you the benefit of any doubt, but the result is decidedly against you. You owe my mother at least \$250, which you have taken in small sums from the cash drawer, or out of the collections, without her knowledge and without any authority. These peculations, for they are nothing else, extend over a period of four months. What are you going to do about it? Are you going to return that money, or do you propose to keep it?"

"I don't owe your mother a cent," replied Grafton, defiantly.

"Then you absolutely deny that you have embezzled a dollar?"

"I do."

"Very well. You can leave."

"Do you mean to say I'm discharged?"

"Yes."

"Where is your authority to discharge me?"

"I'm the manager of the store now. That's my authority."

"I don't recognize you as the manager."

"You did last week when I showed you the paper signed by my mother. Do you wish to see that document again?"

"No. I'll go, but mark me I'll get even with you for this. You won't last here very long. The store is on its last legs anyway, and your management will soon put it in the hands of the sheriff. You're a young upstart, and think you know a whole lot; but you'll soon see your finish."

"I'd advise you not to talk that way, Mr. Grafton. I have evidence that implicates you in a score of petty thefts. If my mother decides to prosecute you there is no doubt that you'll go to jail, and in that case you are likely to see your finish before I see mine."

"Yes, you sneak!" roared Grafton, springing up. "You'll never put me in jail, you young hound! I'll kill you first!"

With that he sprang at Tom like an enraged tiger.

CHAPTER IV.—Knocked Out.

Tom, however, was not caught off his guard. He distrusted Grafton, and expected that he would make some kind of demonstration before he left. Jumping out of the chair he practically avoided the book-keeper's onset, and then straightened up ready for the belligerent rascal's next move. Grafton swung around and went for him with blood in his eye. He was made clean through, and meant to wipe the floor with Tom before he left. He had no doubt about his ability to do so, but he soon met with an unpleasant surprise. Tom ducked his vicious lunge and, side-stepping caught Grafton a swipe in the jaw that sent him staggering back to the chair. With a hiss of rage he sprang up and resumed hostilities. Inside of a minute the boy put it all over him so hard that he was sent up against the wall like a dazed bull. Wild with baffled fury, he picked up a sample article of hardware from the top of the desk and flung it savagely at the boy's head. Tom dodged as well as he could, but the distance was too short between them to wholly avoid the missile, and it caught him a glancing blow alongside the head. He fell like a stricken animal in the shambles and lay still and white on the carpet. Then Grafton began to realize that he had gone a bit too far. He was afraid he had killed Tom, and a vision of the gallows flitted before his mind's eye. He didn't care how badly he might have hurt him, but he didn't want him to actually die for fear of the consequences to himself. As he knelt and felt of the boy's heart a scared face looked in at the door. It was the countenance of Billy White, who had heard a part of the scrap and sneaked in to see what the trouble was. When he saw Tom's face, and the blood running down the side of his face, he gave a yell and rushed out into the store. Grafton had barely time to note that Tom was not dead when Billy's demonstration gave him such a shock.

that he jumped up, rushed to the window that looked out on an alley, threw up the sash, and, forgetting it was protected by heavy rusted iron bars, tried to spring out. That showed how badly rattled he was. He fell back after barking his shins and scratching his nose. Then he saw that he couldn't make his escape that way, so he rushed into the counting room, and dashed for the back door, where the continuation of the alley lay. Through that he made his way to a back street, and hastening to his rooms, packed his trunk and took a train out of town. In the meantime, Mr. Jones, the salesman, alarmed by Billy's cries, rushed back and asked him what was the matter. Billy explained matters in great agitation, and Jones entered the private office and found Tom insensible, looking pretty bad. He sent Billy post haste for a doctor, and then proceeded to try and revive the young store manager. He was successful in bringing him to his senses. Tom declared he felt all in, but managed to acquaint Jones with all that had happened between him and Grafton. By that time Billy brought the doctor back with him. The physician carefully examined Tom's head, and was soon satisfied that there was no fracture of the skull. After binding the boy's head up he gave him something that braced him up, then told him to lie down and go home when he felt able to do so.

"You're not badly hurt, but you've had a narrow escape for your life. You are suffering more from the shock than anything else. I'll make out a prescription which you can have filled at the corner. Take a teaspoonful in water every half hour till you feel better, then make it every hour. You'll be comparatively all right to-morrow."

He took his departure, and Tom sent Billy to the drug-store for the medicine. Jones brought a blanket for him to rest his head on, and then closing the door of the office, he went to the telephone and notified the police of the occurrence, and asked them to arrest Grafton. By that time Grafton was on the train a mile out of town. As Tom lay thinking about his strenuous experience with the late book-keeper of the establishment, all of a sudden he remembered that this was one of the scenes the gypsy seeress had foretold to him.

"Goodness, how in creation could she see this thing ahead? It's a wonder I never tumbled to what was going to happen, for she described the whole thing to me as accurately as it took place. Yet it never occurred to me that I was in any danger from that rascal. I felt satisfied I could handle him, though he is a man and I'm only a boy. I would have handled him, too, if he had fought fair. Why, the scoundrel might have crushed my head in like an eggshell had he hit me square with that heavy piece of iron. Nobody but a coward at heart would have resorted to such means to do an adversary up. He might just as well have drawn a gun on me. If the police get him I'll make him sweat for it all right."

In the course of an hour Tom felt better.

Jones looked in several times to see if he could be of any service. After sitting up another hour Tom put on his hat and, taking Billy with him, started for home.

He reached the cottage without feeling any

the worse for the walk and, sending Billy back, went in to tell his mother about the trouble he had had with Grafton. She was much alarmed when she saw his head bandaged up in hospital fashion.

"My gracious, Tom, what happened to you?"

He told her the whole story. It was the first inkling she had had that the book-keeper was faithless to his trust, and she was much exercised over it.

"Well, the police are looking for him, and may have caught him by this time," said Tom. "I don't suppose we can recover the money he has got away with—that will have to be charged to profit and loss—but I'll see that he gets what is coming to him."

Tom felt well enough to return to the store at four o'clock, and then he got down to work as his own bookkeeper. He remained till the store closed at six, and next morning was on hand at eight. He worked hard that week, both day and night, trying to straighten things out, and get the books posted up to date. The authorities failed to get hold of Grafton, so it seemed evident that he had left town.

"Well, let him go. He won't dare come back," thought Tom.

But that was where he calculated wrongly. He didn't know the ex-bookkeeper as well then as he did later.

CHAPTER V.—The Burglars.

Tom soon found that he had a hard job on his hands to make the store pay, for business in his line continued dull. His father hadn't made a cent for a year before his death, and trade was no better now. The money stolen by Grafton, though it did not exceed \$300 all told, made an inroad on the resources of the store at a bad time, and was seriously felt. Tom started out to drum up trade around town, something his father had not done for years. This took a good part of his time, and as he decided to do his own book-keeping, too, he was forced to put in every night in the week except Saturday and Sunday at the store. Ed Watts dropped in to see him one night.

"Hello, Ed," he said, "what's the price of figs?"

"A quarter a pound," replied Ed. "Greatest beauties in the world. They're sweet, luscious, refreshing and full of flavor. Cheap as dirt at a quarter; just like giving them away. Shall I send a pound around to your house to-morrow?"

"Yes, you may include them in our order, seeing that you crack them up so well."

"Must do that to make them sell, 'cause they've been cussed."

"Haven't you forgotten that gypsy woman yet?"

"How can I when I haven't sold a fig since she laid a spell on 'em?"

"Haven't sold any? Why, you've just sold a pound to me."

"That's the first I've sold since she was in the store."

"Then the spell must be broken, and after this you'll sell them right along," laughed Tom.

"I hope so, for I need the money. How are things panning out with you since you took hold?"

"I'm holding my own. That's doing pretty good under the circumstances. Trade is bad, and has been for a year or more back. Very little building going on, and consequently my wholesale trade is almost nothing."

"I heard that a new factory was to be erected on Prescott street."

"You heard right. I'm after the hardware contract, but there are others, and it's a question whether I'll get it."

"I hope it will bring a bunch of new people to town who will fill up the cottages in my neighborhood that have been vacant so long. I may then be able to extend my trade."

"I hope so, too, for your sake. I want to see you get on, old man."

"Thanks. You've given me a good lift as it is, and I won't forget it. Haven't you a new bookkeeper yet?"

"No. I'm my own bookkeeper at present, that's why I have to work nights."

"You'd better not work too hard or you may do yourself up."

"Oh, I'm strong enough to stand it a while. When I took hold of this store I put my shoulder to the wheel, for I am determined to make it pay once more. At the outset I've got to economize as much as possible. Grafton drew eighteen dollars a week, and stole as much more. It would only have been a short time before the place would have gone up the spout had he remained in charge. I'm saving the eighteen and what he stole, and so we are keeping our heads above water. I'm taking a few orders every day on the outside, and if I can get the factory contract things will begin to look up at the store."

Ed left Tom working and went back to his store to close it up. Tom worked till nearly eleven, and after turning the light low in the counting-room he made a tour of the doors and windows of the store to see that Billy had locked them all.

Four of the windows looked out on the alley and its continuation at the rear of the building.

These were provided with heavy iron bars on the outside, which were considered sufficient protection. One of the panes had been broken in the windows near the back door and had not been repaired. There was a hole in the glass about a couple of inches square.

When Tom came to this window his sharp ears heard voices in conversation close to the sash. He considered this suspicious as no one had any business to be up the alley at that hour of the night, so he listened to see if the men had designs on the store.

"I say it's a good scheme," one of the unseen speakers said. "The judge has lots of money, and \$10,000 won't amount to anything with him, while that sum will set us on our feet in fine shape."

"The scheme is all right, but how are we goin' to work it without gettin' pinched? Kidnapin' the judge's little kid is a serious piece of business. If we should be caught at it the least we'd get would be ten years, and we might get fifteen."

"You've got to take some chances when you're out for the dough. The kid goes out every afternoon for a walk with his nurse. We'll hire an auto and follow them. The moment we see a good chance we'll get out, and while you block

the nurse I'll grab the kid and jump into the machine. Then you'll follow and off we'll go to our hidin' place out of town. We'll hold the kiddy there till her father stumps up the rhino."

"Suppose he won't come up, but puts half the detectives of the county on our track?" said his companion.

"Then he won't see his young one again," gritted the other. "My old woman will look after the kid at the house, while we'll carry on negotiations from another spot altogether. If we are caught the old woman will have orders to carry the child to New York and lose herself in the slums. We will then send word to the judge that he'll never see his young one again unless he pays up and lets us go free."

"He may chance that."

"Let him and he'll soon find out that our threat is no idle one. He'll then be glad to negotiate with us. His kid is worth more to him than \$10,000 and the satisfaction of sending us away."

"When do you mean to start the ball rollin'?"

"Right away. No use losin' any time over it. It won't take us long to make our arrangements."

"All right. I'm with you. Now that is settled between us we might as well tackle this job here. You've got the tools. It won't take us long to get through this door, and once inside we ought to have plain sailin' with the safe. I guess no one comes up this alley at night, so there is little danger of discovery."

"It will be a cinch. I hope we'll find enough in the safe to pay us for our time and trouble."

"I don't imagine we'll make much of a haul; but if it's only \$100 I'll be satisfied. We'll carry off some of the brass stock. That will find a ready sale at the junk store. Old Jinks never asks questions."

Without further loss of time the two rascals started operations on the back of the store.

"So they intend to break in here to loot my safe and my stock," breathed Tom. "It's lucky I overheard them. I'll telephone the police and have them nabbed on the spot. That will queer their kidnaping scheme. I wonder who the judge is whose little daughter they figured on abducting in order to force her father to pay them \$10,000 for her return? Well, I've no time now to think about that. While they're at work on that iron door, with the barred wooden one on the inside, I'll have time enough to communicate with the police."

The telephone was in the middle of the store and Tom rushed to it. In a few moments he got into touch with the police station, and it didn't take him long to post the authorities about what was going on at the back of his store. He was told that several officers would be sent around at once. One would come to the front of the store, where Tom would be ready to admit him, while the others would take the rascals in the rear by approaching up the alley. After hanging up the receiver Tom went to the back door and listened. He heard a small auger at work drilling a hole in the iron outside. Satisfied that the police would arrive long before the rascals could get in, he made his way to the front door and listened. In about ten minutes a policeman walked up, and Tom, opening the door, greeted him.

"They haven't got in yet, have they?" asked the officer.

"No. They've got to open an iron door first, and then a wooden one which is bared on the inside," replied the boy.

"That ought to take them an hour, with proper instruments to work with," said the policeman. "We'll nab them in a few minutes, for three officers have gone around to the alley. Now show me the back entrance."

Tom led the policeman to the back of the store. The work of the auger was plainly heard on the iron door.

"Unbar and open this door, but make as little noise as you can," said the officer.

Tom did as he was requested. The work of the auger suddenly ceased and the drill was withdrawn. Then a pistol shot awoke the echoes of the night, followed by a second one.

"Throw open the iron door," cried the officer.

Tom did so. Two flashes lit up the alley, and two more shots rang out. They heard sounds of a struggle, then a groan and a fall. Scurrying footsteps were heard retreating down the alley in the darkness. Then silence which was broken by dismal groans. The policeman rushed forward to investigate, while Tom remained at the door. To the officer's consternation he found his three comrades stretched out on the floor of the alley. Two wounded by revolver bullets, and one unconscious from a blow on the head.

"Bring a light," called the policeman to Tom.

The boy lighted a lantern and fetched it into the alley. Then he saw how the three officers had got the worst of their encounter with the two crooks, whom they had clearly failed to surprise. Indeed it looked as if the rascals had given them a surprise. The policeman telephoned the station-house and a wagon with more officers was sent around. The burglars had left their tools behind them, but no real clue as to who they were. The wounded men were loaded on to the wagon and carried to the station-house, while the rest of the policemen started to beat up the neighborhood, in the hope of running down the crooks. Tom, marveling not a little at the luck which had attended the rascals, whom he had confidently expected were trapped in the alley, locked up and went home.

CHAPTER VI.—The Kidnapping.

Of course, the story appeared in the Barport Morning News next morning, and everybody wondered how three policemen, with everything in their favor, had not only failed to capture the two burglars, but were actually done up badly themselves. The impression prevailed that the crooks must be desperate rascals, and very expert marksmen with their revolvers. A lot of people visited the alley during the day and viewed the scene of the conflict. The iron door bore half a dozen drilled holes near the spot where the crooks expected to find the bolt that secured the door. Many people entered the store and made small purchases in order to have a talk with salesman Jones. Tom was not around as he was out looking up trade. Ed, who had been astonished when he read about the attempt to break into the store of his friend Nugent the night before, dropped in several times to see Tom, but failed to find him there.

"It's my opinion he ought not to have taken that gypsy witch into his house two weeks ago. I warned him to have nothing to do with her. Her blessing wasn't any better than her curses. I'll bet she hoodooed him. He never was in trouble before, and here he's had two strokes of ill-luck inside of two weeks. The first was the worst, for Grafton came within a narrow shave of killing him. However, the burglars didn't get in and so he hasn't lost anything, but if he hadn't worked in the office till a late hour he wouldn't have been on hand to discover what they were up to, and they'd have made a clean sweep of the store. I wonder what he'll be up against next? If you break a plate accidentally you're sure to break two more things before long. I've never known it to fail. And if you find a piece of money in the street, or somewhere else, you're sure to find money twice again. I wish I could find some money. Nobody needs it worse than me. I never thought it would take so much money to run a small grocery store. I almost wish I hadn't started it. I think I'd have had better luck anyway if that gypsy witch hadn't come in there and queered me. Why should she cuss my figs? That reminds me that I did sell some of them to-day. I guess Tom broke the hoodoo last night when he ordered a pound. He wouldn't have done it if I hadn't cracked them up. That's the way to do business—crack up your goods. I'll do it every time after this," said Ed, as he walked off.

The crooks were hunted for everywhere in town and out of town, the police being particularly active because of the injury their three comrades had sustained at the hands of the rascals, but they were not found. Tom continued to hustle around town, even going out to many of the adjacent villages. His exertions were not without profit, and his mother was well satisfied with the results he achieved. Construction had begun on the new factory, but he had heard nothing from the contractors with respect to his bid for the hardware needed, so he came to the conclusion that somebody else was luckier than he. The stone foundations were about half up when one morning the head of the contracting firm walked into his office just as he was about to go out. The caller's name was Bixby, and he looked like a "live" individual.

"I'd like to see Mr. Nugent," said Bixby.

"That's my name, sir. Take a seat," said Tom, pointing to one beside his desk.

"You are not the head of this establishment, are you?" said the surprised contractor, who expected to meet a man and not an eighteen-year-old boy.

"Yes, sir. I am running the business for my mother, who is the executrix of my late father's estate."

"Oh, well, hem! You submitted a bid for the hardware we need in the construction of the factory on Prescott street. Are you prepared to execute it right up to the handle?"

"Yes, sir, if I get it; but as the foundation is already well under way, I lost all expectation of landing it."

"The fact is we gave the order to Jackson, but he has just notified us that he is in financial straits and cannot carry it out. That compels us to look elsewhere. As your bid is the next lowest, I have called to talk with you on the sub-

ject. You know what we need, as you saw the list of articles, with the quantities, when you put in your bid. Can you furnish everything right off the reel?"

"No, sir, I couldn't furnish you with all the articles in full quantity today, or tomorrow, or even the next day. On such a contract I am entitled to a week's notice at least. I dare say Jackson had that."

"He had two weeks' notice."

"And he has failed you. Give me the contract and I'll get a hustle on and have the stuff here at the earliest possible moment. You can hardly expect better than that of me."

"But I must have at least six kegs of nails on Saturday ready for the carpenters on Monday."

"You shall have them."

"Without fail?"

"Yes, sir; even if I have to buy them in town, which will mean the loss of my profit on them."

Bixby looked narrowly at Tom.

"You look like a smart boy, and a hustler. I'll take a chance with you. If the nails are delivered at half-past four on Saturday, the contract is yours," he said.

"Then I'm sure of getting it, for the nails will be there at that time or before," replied Tom energetically.

"Very well. If you fill the bill up to the letter I will give you a chance to bid on another job we have secured, and all things being even, you will have the preference. We like to deal with one man right along if we find him reliable and as low as anybody else."

"Thank you, Mr. Bixby, I will use my best endeavors to win a continuation of your patronage. My father, in his time, never failed to make good that I know of, and it is my ambition not to be outdone by him."

Bixby nodded approvingly and then took his leave. Bixby & Bachelor were new in that locality, but it was a hustling firm, and bid fair to secure the bulk of the contracting work of the town and neighborhood. It behooved Tom, therefore, now that he had secured an opening with them, to keep in their good graces, for there was no telling how much custom he might not get through them. It was new business, and that counted a whole lot, for it was new business he was after to bolster up his languishing general trade. Tom went to the neighboring town of Bath and bought the six kegs of nails at a figure that would give him a small profit. He had the nails sent on by express, and delivered them by Friday afternoon. Then he called on Mr. Bixby and asked him if he could go ahead and order what he needed to fill the contract.

"You can, the contract is yours," replied the contractor, pleased at the promptness with which he had delivered the nails.

Tom at once sent his order to the large wholesale and importing house in Boston with which he traded, requesting dispatch in the shipment. The goods arrived on time and were ready to be delivered to the contractors on their requisitions. Tom notified them to that effect. Two days later Bixby called on him with a list of specified materials wanted on another job, and Tom put in his bid for it. A week later he was informed that the contract was his, and that the stuff would be wanted in sections at the end of a fortnight. So Tom sent another order to Boston.

One morning Tom was standing in the front part of the store talking to Jones. At that moment a nurse maid with two little girls in charge came down the street. She stopped to look in at a window where some pictures were displayed, and the children walked on ahead. An automobile with two men in it came slowly down the street abreast of the maid and the children. Suddenly it came to a stop, both men jumped out, and while one of them rushed at the children the other stood between them and the maid. The little ones took to their heels screaming with fright. The man singled out one of the two, named Daisy Adams, and reached for her. The screams of the two girls attracted Tom's attention. He rushed out of the store in time to see one of the kidnapers pick up little Daisy.

"Drop her, you rascal!" he cried, darting forward, but the man's companion blocked him.

During the excitement that ensued the first rascal sprang into the auto with his victim and, after a hurried glance at his companion, started off at full speed.

CHAPTER VII.—On the Track of the Kidnappers.

Tom gripped the kidnapers accomplice around the waist, and the man dug his fingers into the boy's hair to make him release his hold. In this way they struggled around on the sidewalk in front of the store, while the nurse maid ran screaming after the fast vanishing auto. Of course all this created great excitement in that neighborhood. Storekeepers and clerks ran to their doors, people upstairs threw up their windows and looked out, while pedestrians stopped and gaped. None of the latter offered to help Tom. Indeed they hardly knew what had happened so rapidly had the game been pulled off. Jones, however, came to Tom's aid, but Jones was an old man of limited muscular power, and he could not do as well as some of the spectators had they come forward. The kidnapers accomplice, seeing his danger, lifted Tom off his feet and swung him around at Jones. His legs hit the old man, and he went down like a ninepin. The rascal then succeeded in shaking himself free of the boy's grip, and, throwing him on top of Jones, started for the nearby corner, around which he disappeared in a jiffy, just as a policeman hove in sight up the street.

Tom was on his feet in a moment and, seizing his hat, which had fallen off, darted in chase of the fleeing accomplice, determined to overhaul him if he could, and land him in the hands of a policeman. The boy could run some, and he got a hustle on in his eagerness to catch the rascal. The fellow crossed the street and hurried down the next one. This led to the water front where there were some very common houses. The man kept straight on, with Tom rapidly overhauling him, till he reached the middle of the last block in that direction. Then he darted into a cheap lodging-house, frequented by sailors and long-shoremen who had no families to support. When Tom reached the entrance of the building he saw the fugitive half way up the second flight. He lost no time in following him. The man, however, disappeared into one of the rooms on the third floor, and Tom didn't know which one he had entered.

He didn't mean to be balked of his man, though the rascal was bigger and stronger than he. He was satisfied that this chap and his companion were the two men who had tried to get into his store, for he had heard them plan the kidnaping of the little daughter of a judge, whose identity was at present unknown to him, but which was sure to come out in the newspaper. The abduction was apparently a success so far, but Tom hoped that if he could capture the accomplice the scheme might be defeated. Both rascals were badly wanted by the police for the laying out of the three officers, and he would be doing a public service if he could get the man he was after.

"He's in one of these rooms at this end of the hall," thought the boy. "The only way I can get at him is by looking into the different rooms till I hit the right one."

He started opening the doors, one after the other, and found them all unoccupied. The window of the end one was open, and Tom suspected that the rascal had entered that room and had got out at the window. He ran to it and looked out. He was just in time to catch a glimpse of the fellow vanished down an alley toward the wharves. Tom saw that he had made his escape by sliding down the leader at the corner, a couple of feet away.

"If that pipe held him it'll hold me," muttered the boy. "I should miss him entirely if I returned to the street and followed him around the block."

So Tom stepped out of the window, grasped the pipe and slid slowly down to the alley. As soon as his feet touched ground he continued the chase, though the fugitive was now out of sight. When he emerged from the alley he saw the rascal walking rapidly along the water-front about half a block ahead. He followed him at a walk for fear the man would look around, catch sight of him running, and surmise at once that he was on his track again.

There were many sailors and other habitues of the docks along the thoroughfare, and by keeping some of them between him and his quarry, he hoped to be able to approach the scoundrel unobserved. He saw the fellow look behind several times, and then, as if satisfied he had thrown his pursuer off his track, he reduced his pace. Tom was now encouraged to believe that he might be able to catch the rascal. It would be a great advantage if a policeman hove in sight, but none did.

Tom gradually neared the man, but was very cautious about it. Finally the fellow entered a corner saloon. It was a tough-looking joint, and Tom, when he came to it, did not venture to go in, for he felt sure that the sympathy of the crowd inside would not flow in his favor, but rather in the crook's. He crossed the street and waited for his man to come out, keeping his eye on the alert for a policeman. No policeman showed up, nor did his man reappear. Tom grew impatient, crossed the street and peered in through the swinging door of the saloon. To his disappointment the man he was after was not in sight. The boy wondered if he had slipped out by a back alley. That locality was intersected with alleys, leading one into another, so that a person acquainted with the neighborhood could easily outwit a pursuing policeman at a

dozen points. Men who got into trouble along the water-front continually availed themselves of the alley thoroughfare to escape arrest, and consequently that block was an eyesore to the police.

Efforts had been made to close some of these alleys, but the owners of the property fought the matter in the courts and won out. Tom, however, knew nothing about all this, so that he could only surmise that the fugitive had got away through a back alley. If he hadn't done so, then he was hiding somewhere in the building, and the boy knew better than to search for him single handed in that place. It might be as much as his life was worth to do so. While he was considering the matter one of the patrons of the saloon opened the rear door and went out, leaving it open. Tom got a view of the prospect beyond. There was an alley and a succession of dirty backyards. Tom determined to risk walking through to the alley, hoping that he would attract special attention. He gained his point without anything happening, and then walked ahead. He went from one alley into another, always expecting to fetch up against a blind wall, but not doing so.

In this way he made his way by a roundabout course to the street where the cheap lodging-house he had entered fronted on. Looking out at the outlet he saw his man on the other side of the way talking to a couple of rough-looking fellows who looked capable of committing any crime. Tom deemed it wise to keep shady and watch. Finally his man started up the street, and he followed. The fellow walked along in a confident way that showed he felt reasonably safe, and he did not look behind at all. He kept straight on up the street for three blocks and then turned up a side one. The moment he disappeared Tom hastened his steps. When he came to the cross street he saw the man a short distance ahead. At the next corner he stopped and stood there as if waiting for some reason.

The reason was apparent when a trolley car came along, for he jumped aboard of it. Pulling his hat well down over his forehead, Tom got on the same car when it reached the opposite crossing. The kidnapers accomplice took an inside seat and the boy remained on the platform. The car soon reached the suburbs and passed on into the open country. Tom wondered where the fellow was going. The car went on at a good speed now, with a clear track ahead.

It reeled off three or four miles, and then the rascal left his seat and jumped off. Tom did not deem it politic to follow him. He waited till the car made a turn a hundred yards ahead, when he alighted, and, taking to the thick hedge, pushed through it and started back in its shadow. He saw the man was walking up a lane toward a shabby-looking farm-house. There was a cross hedge marking the property line, and Tom slipped along behind that, keeping it between him and the man he was shadowing. The fellow went around to the rear of the fence and knocked several times in a peculiar way. Presently the door was opened by a woman, and he entered.

"I wonder if this is the place where they have taken the little girl?" thought Tom, in some excitement. "If it is maybe I'll find a chance to rescue her."

He remained in the shadow of the hedge, watching the house and thinking. After a while smoke began to issue from the chimney. Then the woman came out, went to a well and drew a pail of water. Fifteen minutes later the confederate came out accompanied by the chap who had kidnaped the little girl. The presence of the latter seemed to establish the fact that the little girl was a prisoner in the house. The two men walked across to a barn and entered it, closing the door after them. They remained there till the woman came to the door and shouted to them.

The shades of evening were now beginning to fall, and in a short time it would be dark. Tom didn't mind that he was so interested in the game he was on. The men came out of the barn and entered the house. Tom judged they had been called to supper. A light flashed through the window of the back part of the building, which the boy judged was the kitchen. After some deliberation he ventured to push his way through the hedge, cross the yard, and take a cautious look in through the window. He saw the two men and the woman at supper. After watching them for a little while, during which it grew darker and darker, he returned to the hedge and kept up his watch from there. In a short time the men came out and returned to the barn. They opened both doors and then entered. Ten minutes elapsed and the chug chug of an auto came to Tom's ears.

"The auto in which the girl was carried off is in the barn," thought the boy. "That settles the fact that the girl is right in that house. Shall I return to town and notify the police, or try and rescue her myself, for it strikes me that the men are going away in the machine."

As he spoke the auto backed out of the barn, was turned around in the yard, and then driven to the head of the lane. One of the men, the kidnaper, returned to the house, got two grips and brought them out to the auto. The woman accompanied him to the machine, and stood there talking to both men.

"Here's my chance to get into the house," thought Tom, in some excitement. "The back door is open. I'll have to work around by the barn so they won't see me."

The opportunity looked too good to be wasted, for as soon as the woman went back she would doubtless lock up for the night. So Tom started to put his plan into practice.

CHAPTER VIII.—The Rescue of Little Daisy.

The boy slipped along behind the hedge till he got in a line with the barn, then pushed his way through, crossed the property in the rear of the barn, and walked to the corner of the building. He could just make out the woman in her white dress standing beside the shadowy machine in which the two men were already seated. As she was liable to return to the house at any moment, Tom felt he had no time to lose. Dusk had merked into evening, and it was as dark now as it was likely to be that night.

Tom had no fear of being seen as he crossed the yard, unless one of the three were looking straight in that direction, in which event his moving shadow might be detected by the looker.

That was a chance he had to take and he took it. He reached the back door without attracting notice, and slipped into the kitchen just as the woman bade the men good-by. The auto started down the lane and Tom slipped into the entry back of the kitchen and shut the door. He heard the woman come into the kitchen and start to clean up.

"That will take her some little time," thought the boy. "I will take advantage of it to make my way upstairs and search the rooms for the little prisoner."

Striking a match on the leg of his trousers he saw a back stairway in the entry.

"This will answer all right," he muttered, removing his shoes and then starting up the flight, which creaked under his weight.

He went slowly and cautiously in order to make as little noise as possible, lest the woman might have sharp ears, think the sounds suspicious, and come into the entry to investigate. Nothing like that happened, and Tom reached the landing above without misadventure. He found a door facing him and, opening it, discovered that it led into a vacant room above the kitchen. Another door opened on a small apartment on the opposite side. This appeared to be used only as a store room for a miscellaneous assortment of traps. A third door admitted him to a short hall that brought him to the front of the house where the main stairs were that came up from the front door.

There were two doors off this landing. Both were furnished in a somewhat meager way, and there was no sign of the little girl in either. There was a stairway to a floor above, built only over the front of the house. The first door that Tom came to was locked, but the key was in it. "I'll bet the prisoner is in here if she's in the house at all," thought the boy, turning the key and opening the door.

He was right. He struck a match and looked around the room. Lying on a cot, fast asleep, with traces of childish grief on her face, was the little girl Tom had vainly tried to save from being kidnaped in front of his store. Tom gently roused her. Her scream would have echoed through the house, but the boy clapped his hand over her mouth.

"Don't make a noise, little one," he said in reassuring tones. "I've come to take you home to your papa and mamma."

Her paroxysm ceased at once, and she became tractible, though she could not see Tom very well in the dark.

"What is your name, little girl?"

"Daisy," she fluttered.

"Daisy what?"

"Adams. My papa is Judge Adams. Do take me quick to my mamma and papa."

Tom knew that Judge Adams was one of Barport's most important citizens. He knew that he lived in a fine house on the swellest street of the town. It would be a big feather in his cap to bring this little girl home safe and sound to her parents, who were doubtless frantic over her abduction. He was sure to make a friend of the judge, and influential friends counted a whole lot in the game of life.

"Come, then, we will go, Daisy. Don't be afraid of me. I have come after you to save you from

the bad men and the wicked woman who got hold of you."

"Do you know my papa and mamma?" she asked, putting her hand in his.

"No; but that don't make any difference. I saw the man carry you off from the sidewalk in front of my store, and I came to bring you home."

"Do you keep a store?" she asked.

"Yes. A hardware store on Main street. Now I'm going to take you in my arms so that the woman won't hear us leave the house. If she did she would try to stop me from taking you home. Now don't make the least sound, and don't be afraid. Remember, I'm your friend, Daisy. Perhaps I'd better let you see who I am, and then maybe you'll have more confidence in me."

"You're a big boy, ain't you?"

"Yes."

Tom struck another match and held it so she could look at his face.

"I don't look like a bad boy who would injure you, do I?" he asked, with a smile.

"No. I like you. You will take me to my mamma?"

"I surely will, as fast as I can."

He picked her up and she clung confidingly to him. With his shoes dangling from the hand that chiefly supported her weight he crossed the room to the door. As he reached for the knob he stopped suddenly and listened. He heard steps coming up the stairs outside. It was the woman coming up to see the little prisoner. Their escape was cut off at a critical juncture. What should he do?

He would have to fight his way out, that seemed evident. He was not at all afraid of the woman, but he hated to tackle one of the weaker sex, because he might have to use her roughly, and that went against his grain. But he had to save Judge Adams' little daughter at any cost. He put Daisy down and resumed his shoes.

"Somebody is coming up the stairs," said the child, clinging to him.

"It's the woman, but don't be frightened. She sha'n't hurt you. Keep close to me."

He drew her close to him, and hugged the wall where the opening of the door would hide them. The woman reached the landing, and a light flashed under the door. She came up and tried to turn the key; but it wouldn't turn, as the door was already unlocked. As she was sure she had locked the door when she was last up there, this fact surprised her, and Tom could hear her muttering to herself. Perhaps she thought that the man who was her husband had been up since herself to look at the prisoner, and had carelessly failed to lock the door after him. As she supposed that she was the only one in the house except the little girl, she could hardly suspect that all was not right. At any rate she opened the door.

Tom was waiting for her to enter when he intended to dash out with Daisy and lock her inside. The woman, however, for some reason, did not step across the threshold, but lifted the lamp she carried and flashed the light toward the cot where she calculated the prisoner was. Daisy was not there, of course, and the woman uttered an ejaculation. She looked about the room, but could not see the child. In some confusion she stepped in and flashed the light around. Tom

and the child stood revealed to her astonished eyes behind the door. She uttered an exclamation as she stood looking at them.

"Who are you, and what are you doin' here?" she cried.

"No matter who I am. I have come after this little girl," replied Tom.

The woman glared at him, and an imprecation escaped her lips.

"You'll not take her away. She's my darter."

"I know better. She's the daughter of Judge Adams, of Barport, and was kidnaped this afternoon by the two men who left here in an automobile half an hour ago."

"You're a liar!" snarled the woman.

"Stand out of our way and let us pass," cried Tom.

"I'll not stand out of your way. You sha'n't leave this room—either of you."

She made a move to withdraw, but Tom was too quick to let her catch him in a trap. He grabbed her and a tussle ensued between them. The lamp fell to the floor with a crash, but fortunately did not explode. Exerting his strength the boy flung the woman back into the room. She staggered against a stool and fell backward over it. Tom took advantage of the chance to drag Daisy out on the landing, slam the door and lock it. The woman rushed to it and began pounding furiously on it, threatening at the top of her voice.

"Come, Daisy," said Tom, catching the child's hand. "You're going home as fast as the trolley car can take you."

They ran down the two flights very quickly. Tom found the front door locked and bolted and the key gone, so he had to get out of the house by way of the kitchen. He led Daisy down the lane and they reached the road just as a car, bound for Barport, hove in sight. Tom hailed it and jumped aboard with his little charge. In another moment they were speeding toward town.

CHAPTER IX—Tom Brings Little Daisy Home.

It didn't take long for the car to cover the three miles that lay between them and the gas-lit town. Daisy was pleased to know that she was going back to her dear papa and mamma, and she talked all the way in a lively strain, and hugged close up to Tom as if she recognized him as a very good friend of hers. Tom told her his name, where he lived, where his store was, and lots of things that he thought would interest her. She was a pretty child, with blonde hair and blue eyes. She told him that she had a big sister named Ruby, who also had golden hair and blue eyes, like her own. She told him about her nurse, and the little girl who was with her when the man carried her off. Then she spoke about her papa's house, and her playthings and nice clothes, and, in fact, everything that came into her mind.

The car landed them about five blocks from her home, and they walked the rest of the way there. She skipped gleefully as they walked up the gravelled walk to the front door. She wanted Tom to take her around to a side door, which she said was open, but he thought he had better go to the main entrance. He rang the bell and a natty-

looking maid responded. When she saw Daisy she uttered an exclamation of surprise and joy, grabbed the child in her arms and ran away with her, leaving Tom standing alone on the porch. He heard somebody scream upstairs, and a lot of confusion followed, in the midst of which he heard a gentleman's voice. Presently the maid returned, and for the first time took notice of Daisy's rescuer.

"Did you bring Daisy back?" she asked, looking at him doubtfully.

"I did. Is Judge Adams at home?" asked Tom.

"Yes. Do you wish to see him?"

"I think it is necessary."

"Wait and I will tell him."

She took the precaution of closing the door before she went to see the judge. That gentleman immediately came to the door.

"Well, young man, did you bring my little girl home?" he inquired.

"Yes, sir. If you permit me I will tell you how I found her."

"Step in. I am under great obligation to you for taking charge of her. Where did you find her, and how did you know her? She was kidnaped this afternoon by two rascals, one of whom carried her away in an automobile."

He led Tom into his library and there the boy told him the whole story, from the moment he tried to prevent the two rascals from carrying out their scheme until he succeeded in bringing Daisy away from the house. The judge listened in astonishment to him.

"My dear boy," he cried, grasping Tom's hands warmly, "how can I ever express to you the gratitude I feel for this signal service you have rendered us?"

"You're welcome, sir. It was my duty to try and save the little girl. I did not know whose daughter she was till she told me, but when she said you were her father I knew at once who she was."

"Come with me," said Judge Adams. "You must let my wife and my other daughter see and thank you. They will never forget what you have done for our Daisy."

The judge fairly dragged him upstairs to the private sitting-room where Mrs. Adams was still hugging her darling child. She had been in a collapse since the nurse maid returned with the startling news of Daisy's abduction, and had fainted the moment the child was brought into her presence.

"Laura," said the judge, "we owe Daisy's return to this brave boy, who followed one of the kidnapers for some hours, and finally traced him to the place where our child had been taken by his rascally companion. Then by the exercise of great pluck and perseverance he secured an entrance to the house and brought Daisy away. He has done us a service we never can forget."

Mrs. Adams at once expressed her gratitude. All this time a very lovely young girl of seventeen was seated beside the lady. She was a larger edition of Daisy herself. Judge Adams introduced her to Tom as his eldest daughter, Ruby.

"Now tell your story over again so that my wife and daughter may learn how greatly indebted we all are to you," said the judge.

Tom complied with his request, and mother and

daughter never took their eyes off him during the recital. When he had finished Daisy broke away from her mother, ran over to him and told him he could kiss her, for he was awfully good to bring her back to her mamma and papa.

Mrs. Adams repeated her thanks in a more fervid way than before, and Ruby also murmured her appreciation of his services with a look from her lovely eyes that quite thrilled him. Tom then said he would have to go home, as he had not had his supper, and he feared his mother would be worrying over his unexplained absence.

"You must have supper with us, Nugent," said the judge. "The table has been set these hours, but none of us could eat with our dear child's disappearance in our minds. Laura, take charge of him. I must communicate with the police and let them know that Daisy has been recovered."

"You had better have them send a couple of men out to the house and arrest the woman I locked in on the top floor," said Tom.

"Of course," replied Judge Adams. "I will see to that. You didn't notice the direction the men took in the automobile, I suppose, when they left the house? I dare say it was too dark."

"Yes, sir, it was; but I was more interested in getting into the house unobserved at the time than in anything else," replied Tom.

Tom was induced to remain to the meal, during which he was regarded as a hero by all in the house, for the story of the rescue of Daisy had spread among the servants, the maid having been present when he told it. The judge questioned him about himself, and learned how he was the son of the late George Nugent, the well-known hardware man.

Tom explained how he was running the store for his mother, and how business had been picking up since he had been in charge of the establishment. Judge Adams was greatly pleased with his frank and manly ways, his intelligence and good breeding. His wife was also much attracted by his many good qualities. As for Ruby, she was sure he was very good looking, very brave and a nice boy generally. Tom, himself, though Ruby the prettiest and nicest girl he had ever met, and wished that she was not so socially superior to himself, which would probably prevent him from seeing her as much as he would like to.

After supper, which had taken the place of dinner that day, Tom took his departure, but not before Mrs. Adams had once more thanked him with tears in her eyes, and made him promise that he would call on them again at an early date. The judge accompanied him to the door.

"Remember, Nugent, that from this forth we are your earnest friends and well-wishers. If I can be of service to you in any way, no matter how, I shall take it as a favor that you will call upon me and let me know, for I want to do something for you in recognition of the service you have this day done for us."

"Thank you, sir. I will remember your request," said Tom. "Good-night."

Tom found his mother somewhat nervous over his unexplained absence. He always came home to supper before putting in an evening at the store. She had an idea, however, that business

had taken him to one of the neighboring villages, for that was the only way she could account for his failing to turn up. The story he told her of his afternoon and early evening adventures quite took away her breath, and she was very thankful he had been able to save the judge's little daughter without getting into trouble himself.

Hardly had he got through recounting his story to her when the bell rang and the servant announced a reporter from the Barport Morning News, who was very anxious to see him. Tom gave him an interview, and he departed with the materials for a very graphic story of the rescue of Judge Adams' little girl, which story duly appeared in print next morning, and was read with much interest.

Everybody voted Tom Nugent a first-class hero, and some people said he had done a great thing for himself in winning Judge Adams' friendship. There were two persons who read the story with altogether different feelings. These were the disappointed kidnapers, and they swore to get square with the young hardware merchant at any cost.

CHAPTER X.—A Diabolical Contrivance.

Three days later a messenger delivered a small package at the store addressed to Tom. He was not in when it came, so Jones put it on his desk in the private office. A couple of hours later he came in with Ed, who was trying to persuade him to recommend him to Judge Adams.

"They must buy a lot of groceries," said Ed. "If I could get their trade I'd make a good thing out of it."

"I know, Ed; but Mrs. Adams wouldn't deal at a small store like yours. Besides, you're not in their neighborhood, anyway," replied Tom.

"What difference does that make? I could call every day for their order, couldn't I?"

"But you don't keep the grade of groceries that a family of the standing of the Adamses use."

"I could get them."

"It wouldn't pay you to get superior stuff for one or even two customers. Stick to the line of customers who are patronizing you and try to get more like them. Judge Adams probably does not settle his bills oftener than every quarter. You haven't got the capital to do business that way. The customers you have either pay cash, or, like my mother, settle every week. You can't afford to go out of your depth, old man. First thing you know the sheriff would have his lock on your door."

"I guess you're right, Tom. I'm a chump in some respects," admitted Ed. "I'll follow your advice."

"That's right. Keep within bounds and you'll get along. Hello, I wonder what this is," said Tom, as they entered the office and he spied the package on his desk.

"It bears the stamp of the crack jewelry store in town."

"Open it and see. It's addressed to you," said Ed.

Tom opened it and found a paper box with a letter addressed to him lying on top.

"I guess the letter will explain," he said opening it.

It ran as follows:

"MY DEAR NUGENT: Please accept the enclosed evidences of the gratitude of my wife and self for your invaluable service in behalf of our Daisy.

"Yours Sincerely,

"ALFRED ADAMS."

"It's a present from Judge Adams and his wife," he said.

"It must be something fine," said Ed. "Let's see what it is."

Tom opened the box and found a handsome and valuable gold watch and chain, "From Judge Adams," and a splendid diamond incrusted watch-charm, "From Mrs. Adams."

"Gee! They must have cost a stiff price," said Ed, his mouth watering at the sight of the articles.

"There isn't any doubt of it," replied Tom, looking at his presents with not a little satisfaction. "The judge would sooner have lost all he's worth than have lost his little daughter. She's as pretty as a picture, and as dainty as she's pretty. So is her sister, only more so."

"How old is her sister?" asked Ed, curiously.

"I don't know. Girls don't always give out their ages, but she looks to be about seventeen."

"Just the right age for you, eh?" and Ed grinned like a laughing hyena.

"She's altogether too high for me. The judge and his family belong to the first society in town. I'm not on their level."

"Love levels ranks, I've heard."

"Sometimes, but not often."

"Well, you've got a pull with her father and mother. That ought to help you out if the girl took a shine to you."

"Ed, I think you'd better get back to your store. Seems to me you waste time with me that you could use to better advantage. If I followed your tactics my store would soon be on the hog, to use a slang expression," said Tom, getting up and putting his presents in the safe.

Ed took the hint and left. The reputation Tom had acquired through saving Judge Adams' little daughter gave the store something of a boost. He got many new customers who never would have dealt with him but for the fact that he had made a friend of the judge and his family. Others, who probably had never heard of him before his name appeared in the paper, came to him now when they wanted something in the hardware line.

It was really the best advertisement he could have received. One morning about a fortnight later a small packing case was delivered at the store, charges prepaid, and marked: "This side up. Handle with care." It had come from Boston, and Tom, when he saw it, supposed that it was sent by the wholesale house with which he dealt. Still he had not ordered anything that would correspond with the presumed contents of the case.

Another unusual thing was that no bill accompanied it, nor had any been received by mail. When he came to examine the box carefully on the outside he saw no indication to show that it had come from the Boston house. Yet he could not understand why any other party in Boston should send him a small case of merchandise.

freight paid, for he had no dealings with any other firm.

"The only way to find out what it contains is to open it," said Jones. "The bill, or a reason for sending it to us, may be found inside."

"Well, tell Billy to take it down in the cellar and open it," said Tom.

Billy White was called to take charge of the box, and received directions to open it. He carried it down in the cellar and placed it on the floor beside a small bench on which stood three fire buckets full of water which he had been refilling.

Before tackling the box he started to return the buckets to their shelf. In his hurry one fell out of his hand and deluged the box that he had been told to open. Quite a bit of the water entered the box through a knot-hole, the knot having fallen out in transit.

"I've made a nice lot of extra work for myself," muttered Billy, lifting the box and placing it on the bench.

Then he got a swab and wiped the water from the floor. After that he got a cold chisel and a hammer and proceeded to open the box. Tom was writing a letter to a customer when Billy's face appeared at the door of the office. He looked white and scared.

"Mr. Nugent," he cried "will you come down in the cellar and look at the box. I've got it partly open, but, oh, lord!"

"What's the matter, Billy? You looked frightened."

"I ought to be. If I hadn't accidentally upset a pail of water on that box, me and the cellar would have been blown up."

"Blown up! What do you mean?"

"That box is full of powder, and iron and nails, and a bottle of some kind of stuff. It's a regular infernal machine."

"What!" gasped Tom.

"That's a fact, so help me Moses," said Billy, earnestly. "Come and look at it."

Tom, surprised and startled by the news, followed Billy to the cellar. The box lay on the bench with half the cover off, exposing its contents. Tom viewed the inside with astonishment and not a little consternation. There were two pieces of sandpaper, one at each end of the box.

A dozen matches were arranged over each piece of sandpaper so that whether the box was opened at one end or the other, some of them were bound to ignite, and set fire to a coating of gunpowder on the sandpaper, which in turn would flash into the center where a paper box, perforated with innumerable holes, and full of powder and missiles of all kinds made up of big nails, bolts and jagged bits of iron, was fastened.

A large bottle filled with a pale-colored liquid was imbedded in this magazine, its neck projecting out of it. Truly a most diabolical infernal machine, calculated to work destruction upon the unfortunate person who opened it, and upon his surroundings. Owing to the fact that the powder had been soaked by the water that had got into the box, the contrivance failed to explode, as intended, and Billy White owed his life to a moment's clumsiness and the interposition of a kind Providence.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Tom, as he viewed

the interior of the box. "Who could have sent that to me? He must be a murderer at heart, for you only escaped by the skin of your teeth, Billy. Take down one of those buckets and flood the inside of the box. I'm going to send for the police."

He waited to see the boy do his work thoroughly, and then rushed upstairs to the telephone. Inside of twenty minutes an officer came into the store, and Tom took him into the cellar and showed him the box. He handled the contents gingerly, removing the soaked box with its explosive material, now rendered useless by the water. To make certain, he placed it in a full pail of water and then took out the bottle. Uncorking it he declared it contained sulphuric acid. Another bottle full of benzine was also found in the powder. After dumping out the powder and missiles the officer examined the paper box. Some partially legible writing was on the outside. A magnifying glass was procured from a nearby optician and the writing deciphered. This is what the officer and Tom made out:

"Richard Grafton, Esq., 16 Harper Street, Bayport, Me."

"By George!" cried Tom. "I know that rascal sent it to me. He was former book-keeper here. I discharged him for embezzling funds, and he nearly killed me in my office. The police tried to find him at the time, but he managed to get away safely. This looks like an effort at revenge on his part. The box came from Boston, so he must have been there, and may be there yet, for all I know to the contrary."

The officer took charge of the box and its contents, now harmless, and carried them to the station-house, where he made his report. A description of Grafton was forwarded to the Boston authorities with the request that they keep an eye out for the ex-book-keeper. A description of and full particulars about the infernal machine was published next morning in the *News*, and excited a great deal of curiosity and comment in town.

The name of Grafton, the suspect, was not given out, so people could only wonder what enemy sent Tom Nugent the diabolical contrivance. Many believed that it was the secret work of the kidnapers whom the boy had frustrated, and this was Judge Adams' opinion when he read the story in the morning paper at the breakfast table. His wife and Ruby heard the story with much dismay, and felt no little sympathy for the lad to whom they were under deep obligations. Mrs. Adams and Ruby called at the store that day to see Tom, but he was not in at the time. Mrs. Adams left an invitation for him to call at their residence that evening, or the next, if it was convenient for him to do so. Tom found it convenient and received a cordial welcome. He was chiefly entertained by Ruby, and he found that young lady's society very congenial. He detailed the incident of the infernal machine, and both mother and daughter expressed their horror of the affair. He did not meet the judge on this occasion, as that gentleman was absent at Augusta on legal business.

"You are always welcome here, Mr. Nugent," said Mrs. Adams. "Daisy will be much disappointed when she learns you were here and she did not see you, but we always put her to bed

early. I will have the maid take her around to your store tomorrow morning, for she has been begging me to let her call on you."

"All right. I shall be delighted to see her. She is a dear, sweet chid," replied Tom.

Then he shook hands with Ruby, thanked her for entertaining him, and left.

CHAPTER XI.—Shadowed.

Tom was on the way to the office of Bixby & Bachelor, the contractors, when he ran against Ed Watts, trundling his delivery handcart ahead of him.

"Hello, Ed, you look busy today," he said. "What are you doing over this way? Got a stray customer in this neighborhood?"

"Yes, and she's got the finest looking girl for a daughter you ever saw," said Ed enthusiastically.

"That's so?" smiled Tom.

"Bet your life. I met her at a dance the other night, and when she learned I was in the grocery business she said she'd have her mother deal with me. I am carrying an order to them now in the cart. I worked off a pound of my figs on 'em. I am going to get in a new lot tomorrow. Shall I send you around a pound?"

"Yes. What's the name of this new charmer of yours?"

"Ducky Dutton. Sounds good, doesn't it?"

"Rather."

"Say, I'm dead gone on her. I've fallen in love for the first time."

"The fifty-first, you mean. How about Nellie Gray that you told me you were so sweet on? Going to throw her over?"

"I can't marry two girls. I like Nellie as much as ever, in a way, but Ducky takes the whole bakery. She's a peach—in fact she's a whole orchard. She's inexpressibly lovely."

"That's exactly what you said of Nellie Gray when you first made her acquaintance."

"That's all right, but she isn't in the same class with Ducky Dutton. I'm going to ask Ducky to marry me right away."

"Marry you right away; you're in a rush."

"I mean I'm going to ask her right away to marry me by and by."

"Oh, well I wish you luck. Now go on with your order, and if you take my advice you won't waste time at the house of your new girl, for if you don't attend to business you know what will happen. If you lose your business, Miss Ducky will probably shake you as not worthy of her consideration."

"Oh, lord, I hope not. If I lost her I'd have a fit. She's in my thoughts all the time. I couldn't live without her," said Ed.

"You said the same thing about Nellie Gray. I'm afraid you don't know your own mind. Every new face, if it's pretty, captures your fancy. When you do marry and settle down your wife will have to keep a close eye on you."

"Nonsense! I'll never love anybody but Ducky. I'll be true to her as long as I live. I'm ready to swear to that on the Bible."

"So long," said Tom, abruptly walking off, for that was about the only way he could get rid of Ed when that lad was wound up.

That evening Tom decided to go to the meeting of a club he belonged to and which he had not attended since he took charge of his father's store. He was ready to leave the house at half-past seven when the housemaid told him that there were two suspicious characters hanging around the house.

"Suspicious characters!" exclaimed the boy.

"Yes, Mister Tom. I don't like their actions. I'm afraid they intend to rob the house tonight."

"Where are they?"

"On the other side of the street, and I'm sure they're watching this house."

"I'll take a look at them," said Tom, and walking into the parlor, which was not lighted, he peered out through one of the windows.

He saw two dark shadows on the other side of the way, apparently a couple of men lounging there, but whether they were watching the cottage or not it was impossible for him to say. He watched them for several minutes without coming to any conclusion as to their business, then he sought out his mother and told her to be sure to see that the doors and windows were securely locked, as he might be out late. Tom left the house a few minutes later. When he reached the corner he happened to look back and saw two men coming after him. They looked very much like the men who had been standing opposite the cottage. A suspicion struck Tom that maybe these men were after him.

To establish the fact if he could he turned the corner quickly, though he was not bound in that direction, and then darted in behind the hedge that surrounded the street front of the corner property. He crept along the back of the hedge to its junction with the side hedge, and crouching down waited for the men to come up. They did so quickly, but stopped at the corner and seemed at fault.

"Where in thunder did he go?" asked one of the men. Tom heard the words quite plainly, and that settled the point he wanted to learn.

"He must have gone into one of these cottages along here," replied the other. "He'll probably be out in a few minutes, and then we'll have him."

"All I ask is to get one crack at his nut with this," said the first speaker, pulling out a slingshot, "and I'll gamble on it he'll never butt in again where he has no business. He put us out of a clear \$10,000, and I mean to put him out of business altogether."

The man's words enlightened the boy as to the identity of the two men. They were the kidnapers whose scheme he had frustrated. The police had given up the hunt for them, supposing they had skipped the county, and they were now taking advantage of the fact. Doubtless they had been hiding all the time somewhere in the vicinity. The woman was in jail awaiting the action of the Grand Jury. The public prosecutor had been holding back in her case, as she was simply recognized as an accomplice, in the hope that the two principals might be caught.

"Yes, he's too smart to live. I never will understand how he located the house, and how he managed to get into it without Bess seein' him."

"It's my opinion that he outwitted me down on the water-front," said the other. "I thought

I shook him off when I got out of the lodgin' house into the alley by slidin' down the water pipe, but I guess I didn't. Or maybe he hung around till he caught sight of me again. I remember there was a boy on the rear of the trolley car when I went out to the house, but I didn't think it was him. At any rate, he didn't get off when I did."

"No matter how the thing came about, he spotted the house and saved the kid. He did us up and got Bess in jail, now we've got to do him up."

"I wonder who that chap was who sent him that infernal machine? He must be down on him, too."

"That fellow was a chump. Why if the thing had gone off, as intended, it would have killed the store boy, and wrecked the cellar, but wouldn't have hurt the party it was intended for. He should have sent something smaller—something that this Nugent would have opened himself in his office, and then somethin' might have happened."

"We might have done that ourselves if we knew how to fix such a bomb up."

"What's the use of talkin' about what we might have done. That isn't in our line. This little weapon in my hand is safer and surer. It makes no noise and goes right to the spot."

"Seems to me he's stayin' inside a long time."

"Maybe he's payin' a visit. If he is we'll have to wait some time."

"If a cop should come along we'd have to move on."

"Not much fear of one turnin' up in this locality. We stood watchin' his house for more than an hour, and we didn't see one."

"Well, let's squat down against the hedge. We won't attract notice then."

They sat down and continued to convene. As their talk was of no further interest to Tom, he decided to get away by a flank movement, notify the police of the presence of the rascals in that neighborhood, and trust that they might be captured. So he retired up the side hedge as far as he could go, pushed his way through it, retraced his steps to the corner above his cottage, and made a detour around the block.

Three blocks from the spot where the men were waiting for him he met a policeman, to whom he told his story. The officer went to a public telephone booth, communicated with Headquarters, and asked for a couple of men to help him make the arrest. Tom then went on to the club, leaving the capture of the rascals to the proper authorities.

CHAPTER XII.—In Which Love Plays Mad Pranks.

Next morning Tom learned from the paper that the two kidnappers had been cornered the night before while lying in wait for him, but they made their escape after wounding one of the policemen. This was the fourth officer they had injured since they came to town, and the force got busy with fresh energy to try and catch them. They failed to find any trace of them, though it was now believed they were in the neighborhood. Wherever their hiding place

was, it was a good one, and Tom heard nothing more from them for several weeks.

Business occupied his attention altogether, as he was trying to make a record for himself. Trade was now panning out pretty well. He was doing so well that he no longer considered it necessary to work overtime on the books, but hired a young bookkeeper who had been recommended to him by Judge Adams. He became a regular visitor at the judge's residence, and as he was chiefly entertained by Ruby, he had got into the habit of asking for her when he called, and therefore was recognized as her own caller.

They had become very well acquainted, and Ruby treated him with so much consideration that he began to build a few castles in the air, in which she was the central figure. Judge Adams sent him many first-class customers, and was always trying to advance his interests. Once in a while he saw Daisy, and the child always greeted him with open arms.

She never failed to make her nurse take her to the store at least once a week, and if Tom wasn't there she was greatly disappointed. If he was there she made a bee-line for the office, climbed into his lap, put her arms around his neck, gave him a hug and several kisses, and declared that she loved him next to her and papa, mamma and Ruby.

"And I love you, also, Daisy," he would always say.

"Don't you love Ruby, too?" she naively asked him one day.

"Yes, but you mustn't tell her."

"Why not?" she asked, looking him in the eyes inquiringly.

"Because I haven't any right to love her, and so I don't want her to know," replied Tom, confidentially.

"How funny. I asked Ruby the other day if she loved you, and she wouldn't answer till I coaxed her awful hard. Then she took me in her arms, and hugging me close, said that she did love you very dearly, but that I must never tell you, for she didn't want you to know," said Daisy, artlessly.

Tom's heart gave a great jump.

"Did she really say that, Daisy?" he asked, eagerly.

"Yes, she did," replied the little girl, nodding her head in a decided way.

"Do you think she meant it?"

"Yes. You gave her your picture and she keeps it on her dresser, and I've seen her looking at it lots of times. And she kisses it, too, for I've seen her."

Daisy spoke without the slightest idea that she was giving away her sister's most precious secret, and Tom was nearly wild with delight. He forgot however, that Daisy would be just as likely to give him away, too. And she did. That evening she wanted Ruby to put her to bed instead of the maid.

"I saw Tom to-day, Ruby," she said as her sister was undressing her.

She always called the young hardware merchant Tom.

"Did you, dear?" replied Ruby, little suspecting what was coming.

"Yes. I asked him if he loved you."

"Oh, Daisy, you shouldn't have done that," said Ruby, blushing crimson.

"Why not? He always says he loves me, so why shouldn't he love you, too? He said 'Yes,' but I mustn't tell you. Wasn't that funny? That's just the way you talked when I asked you if you loved him."

Ruby's blush deepened and her heart beat so fast she had to put her hand over it.

"Ain't you glad?" asked Daisy, when Ruby failed to answer her.

"Yes, of course," murmured Ruby.

"I told him you said you loved him, and he seemed awfully pleased," went on the little girl in the most innocent way in the world.

"You didn't," cried Ruby, holding her blushing face on her sister's shoulder.

"Yes, I did. And I told him you kept his picture on your dresser, and kissed it lots of times, for I saw you do it."

Ruby was paralyzed. She rushed Daisy into bed, sent in the nurse and fled to her own room, from which she didn't appear the rest of the evening. Three nights afterward Tom called as usual, but Ruby sent word that she had a terrible headache and he would have to excuse her. Tom, after staying a while with Mrs. Adams, took his leave and returned home greatly disappointed, unconscious that Daisy's artless tongue was the cause of it. Ruby was not really indisposed, but she couldn't face Tom knowing that Daisy had told things that would make their meeting very embarrassing to her.

Still for all that she felt very happy in the knowledge that Tom had confessed his love for her to her sister. She was sure he meant it, and her own heart responded to it; but she felt distressed to think that she might not be able to receive her young lover for some time to come, as she could not look into his eyes after what he had learned. She didn't chide Daisy, since the damage was done, and her words could not be recalled, but after that she hid Tom's picture, and only looked at it when she knew she was alone.

Daisy noticed that the picture had vanished, and insisted on knowing where it had gone. Ruby put her off till she said she would tell Tom when she next saw him, and Ruby, in a panic, found the picture and put it on her dresser again. Daisy would probably have told Tom all about the incident when she saw him again, only she didn't think about it. She did tell him that she told Ruby he loved her, and all that Ruby said that night when putting her to bed. Tom got as red as a beet and had nothing to say.

"Ain't you glad I told her?" she asked, stroking his face with her little hand.

"No, Daisy. I told you not to do it. I don't know what your sister thinks of me now. Maybe she won't see me any more."

"Why not?" asked Daisy, opening her eyes very wide.

"You'll understand one of these days when you grow up."

"Are you angry with me?" asked the little girl, tears coming into her eyes.

"No, darling. I couldn't be angry with you. I love you too much for that; but I'm sorry you told your sister what I said."

"But you do love her, don't you?" said Daisy, winding her arms around his neck.

"Yes, I love her with all my heart, and I shall always love her as long as I live, but I can never be anything to her but a friend, because I am not in her class."

"I don't know what that is, Tom."

"I couldn't make you understand. You will learn that, also, one of these days."

"Will you always love me, too?"

"Yes, always," he said, kissing her. "Now run along, for the maid is waiting for you outside."

When Daisy got home she hunted Ruby up, and getting into her lap, told her all that passed between he and Tom in the office. Ruby said nothing, though she blushed a great deal.

"Are you angry with me for telling Tom you loved him?" asked Daisy.

"No, dear. Now go and play."

"But I want to talk to you about Tom," begged her sister.

Ruby wouldn't talk. She didn't dare to, for she knew Daisy would repeat everything to Tom. After that she never mentioned the boy's name to Daisy, except when she could not help it. The next time when Tom called, Ruby made it a point to be out, and he was disappointed again.

He felt that it was because Daisy had given him away. He would have felt all the more for the fact that he believed Ruby really cared for him. Still if she did he couldn't see why she could be offended because he had told her sister that he loved her. He didn't dream that it was because Daisy had given her sister's secret away that Ruby could not bring herself to meet him again, for the present at least.

CHAPTER XIII.—Face to Face with Death.

One day Tom received a letter from a carpenter and builder named Spear, who lived in Brookville, a small village about ten miles from Barport. Spear wanted to see Nugent about some hardware he needed in his business. He asked Tom to call on him as soon as possible, as he was too busy to make the trip to Barport. The trolley road didn't run to Brookville, but passed within a mile of it. Tom, therefore, decided to hire a rig and drive all the way to the village.

He started after dinner and reached his destination around three. He had no trouble finding Spear, and after the builder had dickered with him over a fair-sized order, and he had secured it, he left Brookville about five o'clock. About half way back the road ran over the low lines of cliffs that formed that part of the Maine coast. Tom expected to reach Barport about seven. He was just passing an old deserted roadhouse when two men suddenly sprang out into the road, and while one seized the horse by the bridle the other presented a revolver at the boy, and ordered him to throw up his hands and step out of the buggy. The tone of the man's voice sounded somewhat familiar to Tom.

The boy looked at him closely and recognized the fellow as one of the kidnapers—the chap he had followed so persistently until he led him to the house where Daisy was a prisoner. Naturally Tom believed his companion was the other kidnaper. With a revolver pointed at his head the boy had no choice but to do as he was told. The

rascals had got him at last, and he was afraid to guess what they intended to do with him. He yielded with the best grace possible under the circumstances, and the other fellow, leaving the horse standing alone, came up and, pulling a piece of thin rope from his pocket, bound Tom's hands behind his back.

"Now march," said the man with the revolver. "Straight ahead along that path."

Tom marched, feeling very like an animal driven to the slaughter pen. The chap occasionally prodded him with the muzzle of his weapon, as if to remind him that he meant business. The other man remained behind to look after the horse and buggy. Tom's course took him into a wooded ravine that led down toward the shore.

When the beach was nearly reached he was pushed through a fissure in the rock, and shoved forward through a dark passage until he and his captor stepped into a cave lighted by a lantern.

Here the man picked up a rope and tied the boy to a tall, thin rock.

"Well, young fellow, we've got you at last, and when the sun rises again you won't see it," said the rascal.

"Do you mean to keep me a prisoner in this place?" asked Tom.

"No, we don't."

"Then why won't I see the sun when it rises again?"

"Because you'll be ready for the undertaker by that time."

"Do you mean to murder me?"

"You'll understand in good time what we intend to do with you. Do you recognize me?"

"I do."

"Well, me and my pal have sworn to get square with you for doin' us out of a large sum of money. We've made two attempts to catch you, but failed. Now you've walked into our hands yourself. Everythin' comes to the chaps who wait long enough. At any rate, you've come. Your appearance was unexpected, but none the less welcome. We received you with open arms and a loaded revolver. If I wished to blow off the roof of your head now I could do it, and none would be the wiser. You are reserved for a different fate."

The man laid the revolver down on a flat-topped stone and eyed Tom with a kind of malignant satisfaction. Tom listened with a beating heart to the fellow's words, but made no reply.

He judged that it would only be a waste of breath to hold any communication with him. In a few minutes the other crook entered the cave.

"This is a slice of luck we did not look for," he said. "The rig is just what we need to take us to Barport after dark. As for this chap——"

"We'll fix him before we leave so he'll never give us any more trouble," replied his companion.

"What is it you have in mind—hangin' or shootin'?"

"Neither. I've got a better scheme. It's just as sure and there won't be any blood spilled. Come over this way and I'll explain it to you."

The two rascals stepped aside, and the man who brought Tom into the cave talked with his associate in a low tone.

"It's just the thing," Tom heard the other say, in a tone of satisfaction. "Nobody'll know how

he came to his death. You've got a great head, Smith."

Presumably Smith felt flattered by the commendation.

"It isn't the head, but the brains that's in it, Shackley," he replied.

"Well, let's figure on winnin' them ten thousand cases all over again. Instead of the kid this time we'll fly a little higher. We haven't Bess at our back now, but that gypsy woman who is livin' in a hovel up the shore can be persuaded to help us if we make her a suitable inducement. Them women will do anythin' for money," said Shackley.

They talked together some time, but Tom couldn't hear a word they said.

In fact, he was more interested in his own immediate future than the scheme the rascals were contriving. The men finally went out through the passage, leaving their prisoner alone. They were gone more than an hour. When they got back they unbound Tom from the rock and marched him outside into the gully. It was almost dark now. A stiff breeze was blowing in from the ocean, and the sky was somewhat overcast. They carried their prisoner down to the shore and walked him along the beach. After covering perhaps a hundred yards they came to a break in the cliff and beach where the sea dashed in at high tide. Dragging Tom into a sort of basin, the bottom of which was fully four feet lower than the entrance, and filled with sea water to that height, they forced him down into the pool, and bound him to a stout post in the center of it.

Suspecting their purpose, he put up a desperate resistance, but as neither of the rascals alone was quite his match, he had no show at all with both of them, particularly as his hands were bound, which fact made him practically helpless.

When they had fastened him securely to the post, and gagged him, they sat down on the edge of the pool and asked him how he liked the fate that lay before him.

"Nobody comes along here after dark," said Smith, "and if any one did he wouldn't look into this place. Nothin' comes in here but the sea as the tide rises. There's high-water mark," continued the ruffian, flashing the lantern light upon a line of half-dried seaweed that clung to the wall a couple of feet above the level of Tom's head. "Long before the water gets up there you'll be in kingdom come."

"When we get back after midnight we'll come down here and take a look at the place where you are. You'll be out of sight under the green water then, and as dead as a salted herrin'," said Shackley, with a grin. "In the mornin', some time, when the tide is out again, we'll cut you loose from the pole and throw you into the sea. Maybe you'll float down into Barport harbor and be picked up there. If you don't get so far you'll be found somewhere along shore, and be planted free of charge, which will save your folks the expense of a funeral."

"This is what you get for buttin' into our business," said Smith.

"It's a fine, easy death, drownin' is," put in Shackley. "The only trouble is you'll feel it comin' on you by degrees. You'll feel the water

creepin' up your chest, little by little, till it reaches your mouth and nose, and then——”

“You'll suffocate,” interjected Smith.

“You'll have plenty of time to say your prayers, if that's any consolation to you. Sorry we can't take a message from you to your folks. They'll never know how you turned up your toes. Verdict of the coroner's jury will be, 'Found drowned. Very simple and to the point.'

In this way the scoundrels tried to make Tom feel as miserable as possible. They remained with him till the tide started to flow into the pool, and then, calling his attention to the fact, they wished him good-by and left him alone face to face with a horrible, lingering death.

CHAPTER XIV.—In the Nick of Time.

Tom felt that he was up against it hard, and he saw not the faintest ray of hope to cling to. It looked as if he was surely doomed to death. We will not describe the tenor of the boy's thought as time slipped slowly away in the gloomy recess of the break in the cliff, and he realized that the water was rising slowly around him, and that in a short time he would cease to live. He thought of his mother, of Ruby, of the store, of everything in fact that had an interest for him in life, until his brain felt ready to burst with the agony that welled up from his young, strong heart. The water reached the level of his shoulders, and he tried frantically to shout for help, but the gag prevented him from making a sound that could be heard a yard away.

At that moment a lantern flickered along the beach. It was borne in the hands of a dark-skinned, wild looking woman, of gypsy aspect.

She was hurrying in the direction of the break in the rocks as if she had some definite purpose in view. By the time she reached it the water flowing in the pool was up to Tom's chin. Without a moment's hesitation the woman splashed through the water, not over a foot deep as yet outside, entered the cleft, and flashed her lantern upon the surface of the pool.

She uttered a cry as she saw the boy's head sticking out of the green opaque water that eddied around his throat. Hastily placing the lantern on a rock where its light would illuminate the pool, she sprang into it. Taller somewhat than Tom, the water came to a level with her shoulders. The first thing she did was to tear the gag from the boy's mouth.

“Save me!” was all he could say.

Without a word she drew a sharp knife from her waist and, bending down, felt for the thongs that bound Tom to the stake. Holding her breath under the surface, she quickly severed part of them, and then raised her head to catch her breath. Another effort and she completed her job. Tom's hands were still bound, but she made no attempt to release them till he had dragged him out of the water.

“You are saved,” she said. “I came near being too late.”

Tom recognized her as the gypsy seeress he had befriended at his cottage.

“You here!” he exclaimed, wonderingly. “You speak as if you knew I was in this place.”

“You recognize me?” she asked.

“I do. You were at my house two months or more ago, and read my fortune in a drop of ink. Most of what you prophesied had already come true, but this—this terrible experience you did not foresee.”

“I did, but did not tell you. Said I not that your life would be in great peril, but that you would not die?” she said.

“You did, but I thought that prophecy was fulfilled when my ex-bookkeeper came within an ace of braining me with a heavy piece of hardware on the second day after you told my fortune.”

“Nay, I warned you of that peril and described it to you, thinking you would guard yourself against it.”

“I know you did, but it never flashed across my thoughts until after the incident happened. How came you to come here in time to save my life to-night?”

“I have come here every night at the rise of the tide.”

“Every night?” he exclaimed.

“Yes. I knew this thing would happen, but I did not know when. I determined that I would save you. In fact, I knew that my hand would prevent your death. So I took up my abode in a ruined hut half a mile from here, to be on hand when the moment came. Every night I visited this pool, for it was the spot I saw in the drop of ink, and when I saw you were not here I went back. To-night something told me the time was come. I lay down on my couch with the lantern in readiness to await the rising of the tide. Unfortunately I fell asleep, and but for a dream that awakened me you would have—no, no, you could not have perished, for it was recorded in the book of Fate, that I was to save you, so things could not have happened otherwise.”

“I owe my life to you, and I trust you will believe me grateful,” said the boy, earnestly.

“You have paid the debt in advance. Say no more,” she replied. “Now that I have accomplished my mission in this neighborhood, to-morrow I shall continue my wanderings, for I am an outcast from my tribe, and must complete my life in misery and despair.”

“You shall not,” replied Tom, taking her brown and skinny hand tenderly in his. “I owe my life, and I shall hereafter provide for you as long as you live.”

“No, no; I ask nothing from you.”

“Would you disappoint me? Would you refuse the boon I offer you? Tell me your name, that I may engrave it in my heart.”

“I am called Madge Oatfield.”

“You will come home with me and live at my mother's cottage, as our honored guest.”

“Impossible. I am a wandering Ishmael. There is no future for me but—death, which I long for as a happy release from my sufferings.”

“At least you will stay with us a little while. Accept the haven of our home till Fate beckons you on again,” begged the boy.

She shook her head.

“I am not a house-dweller, nor of them, and my untamable nature would revolt at any change other than what I am accustomed to.”

“Will you accept money from me? It would

be of great service to you, and I shall feel hurt unless you let me do something for you."

"I will accept a small sum," she answered.

"I can't give it to you now, as those rascals cleaned me out, but I will bring it to your hut tomorrow if you will tell me where it is," said Tom.

"You will find me there till mid-day. Come with me now. I will build a fire for you to dry your clothes. The night air is cool, and you cannot return home as you are."

"But you are wet through, too, Madge," he said.

Her eyes brightened at the sound of her name uttered in a friendly tone.

"Never mind me. I am accustomed to all weathers and conditions. The rain has soaked me to the skin and the snow has chilled me to the bone more than once. I am strong and rugged though I may not look it."

Madge led the way along the shore to the old hut in which she had taken up her temporary residence. There she built a fire, handed Tom a blanket, and told him to disrobe and hang his clothes near the flames. She disappeared behind a hanging blanket that hid her couch, and there divested herself of her damp garments and got into the bunk. Tom's garment dried slowly, and the stillness and solitude of the hut soon lulled him to sleep as he lay stretched in front of the fire. Midnight came and passed and still he slept on. And while he slept things were happening that would have concerned him greatly had he been aware of what was taking place. The two kidnapers had gone to town with a purpose in view, and their purpose took them to the vicinity of Judge Adam's home. The judge and his wife had gone to an evening party, leaving their two daughters at home with the servants. Smith went to the front door and rang the bell. When the servant came he asked to see Ruby Adams.

As he looked fairly respectable he was admitted to the hall and the girl notified that a man wished to see her on an important errand. Suspecting nothing wrong, Ruby came down-stairs and asked the stranger what he wanted to tell her. He drew an envelope from his pocket and handed it to her with a bow. As she started to open it, half turning toward the light of the lamp at the foot of the wide stairway, he suddenly grabbed her and pressed a handkerchief over her face. Greatly frightened, she tried to escape from him, but his grasp held her firm till her senses fled under the benumbing influence of the drug the handkerchief was saturated with. As soon as he felt her limbs relax, he removed the handkerchief, took her in his arms, opened the door, and hurried with his burden toward the gate where his companion sat in the buggy. Passing the senseless girl up to Shackley, he mounted to his seat, and taking Ruby in his arms again, his associate started the horse and drove out of the town by the darkest and most unfrequented route.

CHAPTER XV.—Tom Makes a Surprising Discovery.

Tom woke up about two o'clock and found the fire reduced to a mass of glowing embers. He had no idea what time it was, but did not think

it was yet midnight. He felt of his clothes and, finding them fairly dry, put them on. He called to Madge in a low tone and receiving no reply concluded she was asleep, which was the fact.

"No use of arousing her," he thought. "I will see her in the morning when I bring her the money. I have quite a walk home, all of seven miles, but I guess I can make it in about a couple of hours."

He stepped out into the night air, and looked for some place by which he could gain the top of the low cliffs along which the road ran. He started back in the direction of the pool where he had nearly lost his life. The tide was on the turn, but had not receded to any great extent. He kept his eyes on the cliffs as he walked along and tried to make the ascent at several places, but failed to find a path that went all the way up.

"I'm afraid I shall have to go on to the gully and ravine down which those rascals brought me. I hope I won't run foul of them or my cake would be all dough. I dare say they have returned before this and are satisfied I am dead under the deep water of the pool. I guess it would give them a shock to see me alive and active, but I am not anxious to surprise them in that way. The worst of it is that when they learn that I escaped them, as they will know when they see no dead body attached to the stake in the morning, they may lay for me again. They are certainly desperate villains, who have little regard for human life, for their attempt on my life was a most cold-blooded crime. I won't feel really safe until they have been put behind the bars."

When he calculated that he was drawing near the gully he walked close in under the shadow of the cliffs, as he didn't know but the rascals might be on the watch. The break in the beach where the sea ran through the fissure into the pool was, fortunately, on the other side of the gully, for he could have passed it at high tide without removing his lower garments in order to ford it without getting his clothes wet again. Reaching the gully at last he found it silent and deserted, so he entered it without hesitation. He kept on the lookout for the entrance to the cave, which was so narrow that it might easily be passed unobserved in the gloom. Presently he heard voices between him and the ravine. He stopped and listened to make out where the speakers were. He was satisfied they were the kidnapers. He couldn't go forward anyway without fear of discovery, for they were somewhere in his path. Tom looked around for some good place of concealment, but the gully at that point was bare of trees or bushes. As he backed away he tripped over a big stone and fell right into the entrance to the cave. As he picked himself up he heard the men utter ejaculations, for they had heard the noise of his fall and started in that direction. Tom looked out, and seeing their shadowy figures coming, felt that the only thing he could do was to take the risk of following the passage into the cave. This he did. The lantern was burning in the cave. He stopped and listened to see if they were coming in. At first there was no indication of it, but in about five minutes he heard them in the passage. He rushed over to a huge boulder and hid himself behind it.

From there he saw the two rascals enter the cave and look around.

"There's no one in here," said Shakley. "Whoever made that noise must have gone back toward the shore."

"Well, let him go, then. Some yap who lives around here, I guess."

"It's a good thing he didn't blunder in here, for he might have seen the girl."

"Not unless he'd looked pretty close. We'd have caught him, anyway."

"But we don't want this place to be discovered."

"Of course not; that's why the chap was lucky in not getting in, for we'd had to sew his mouth up."

"I'm feelin' sleepy, so I'm goin' to turn in for a snooze. In the mornin' we'll carry the girl up to the roadhouse and arrange with that gypsy woman to take care of her for us till we can make terms with the judge."

On hearing these words Tom's heart gave a jump. Had the rascals actually kidnaped Daisy again? If they had he would save her at all costs. Smith agreed that they had nothing to gain by remaining awake any longer, so the two men threw themselves down on a couple of straw couches, after taking a drink from a black bottle, and inside of ten minutes both were breathing heavily. Tom made no move for a while.

"If they've kidnaped Daisy again I wonder where they have stowed her, for I can't see any one but themselves in this place," he thought.

After the lapse of nearly half an hour Tom left his hiding place and started to look around. He saw a hole in the rocks where the crooks kept their supply of provisions. To investigate further he had to pass the men. Smith lay on his side with one hip thrown up. From his pocket peeped the butt of his revolver. Tom wondered if he could get possession of it without awaking the rascal. It would come in plenty handy in case they woke up and surprised him there. He got down on his hands and knees and crept close to Smith. Then he laid his fingers on the handle of the weapon and with great caution began to work it out of his pocket. It was a ticklish job, and he had to go about it slowly and carefully. He got it out at last, and felt he had scored a big point. Continuing his investigations he came upon the almost hidden entrance to a smaller cave and entered. Flashing a match he looked around. Lying on the sand was a girlish figure, but from her size this person could not be Daisy. Tom advanced and, lighting another match, bent down and looked at the silent figure. He uttered an exclamation of surprise and consternation when he saw that he was looking at Ruby.

"The infernal scoundrels!" he ejaculated. "So it's she they have run off with this time. I wonder how they could have got away with her? Their schemes seem to have a lucky beginning even if they don't pan out in the end. How can she sleep in the hands of those villains? Ruby, wake up. It is I—Tom."

He shook her gently, but she made no response.

"Great Scott! I see how it is. They've drugged her. How am I to get her away in that condition? I never could carry her to town, and I dare not leave her here while I go for help."

Ah, I could carry her to Madge's hut and leave her there. She'd be safe with Madge, for that woman would do anything for me."

After taking a look at the sleeping crooks, Tom picked Ruby up and carried her into the outer cave. As the floor was composed of loose sand, his shoes made no sound. He crossed the cave and reached the passage without anything happening. It seemed easy to accomplish the rest of the way to the gully and the open air. In a few moments he was safely outside with the girl of his heart in his arms. Then he carried her down to the shore and started back for the hut.

CHAPTER XVI.—Young Love.

Ruby was no light weight for Tom to carry along the shore, for she weighed a matter of 125 pounds. She was a very precious burden to him, though, and he held on to her as though she were a bag of gold or jewels he had just found. He was compelled to rest frequently along the route, for every person's power of endurance has its limit. The girl showed no signs of coming to her senses, so that Tom felt not a little concern about her condition. At last he reached the hut, entered, laid Ruby down and aroused Madge. When the woman came out from behind the blanket she viewed Ruby with surprise. She seemed to recognize her as one she had seen before.

"How came she here?" she asked.

"I brought her."

"Where have you been? Where did you meet her? She seems to be in a deep sleep."

"She is drugged," replied Tom.

"Then she is the victim of some villainy."

"You have guessed it. She was kidnaped from her home this night by the same scoundrels who attempted my life."

"Do you know who she is?"

"The eldest daughter of Judge Adams."

"You have met her before?"

"I have."

"Do you know she is the girl who is the keynote of your future?"

"I have guessed it, for she is the one you described when reading my fortune," replied Tom.

"I have never seen her before, yet I recognized her the moment I looked at her. You will marry her some day."

"I hope so, for she is a lovely girl and I already love her dearly. Can you do anything to bring her out of her stupor?"

"I will try, but I fear I can do little if she has been heavily drugged."

Ruby, however, was beginning to revive from the effects of the narcotic she had inhaled, and Madge soon had the satisfaction of bringing her to her senses. She gazed wildly around her, for everything looked so strange to her eyes. Madge looked weird in the dim light of the lantern, while Tom was but a shadow in the background.

"Where am I?" she asked.

"With friends," replied the gypsy seeress.

"Friends!" cried Ruby. "But I am not at home, but in some strange place. Oh, what has happened to me?"

"Don't be afraid, Ruby, I am here," said Tom, stepping forward.

"Mr. Nugent!" she exclaimed. "Is it really you?"

"Yes; and you know you can trust me fully."

"Yes, yes, I know I can. But please explain the meaning of this."

"You were abducted, like your sister, from your home to-night, by two men, after first being drugged."

"Ah, I remember now. A man called to see me. When I went down and met him in the hall he handed me a letter. As I was about to look at it he seized me and pressed a cloth over my face. I must have fainted, for I remember nothing more till now."

"I discovered you in a cave, about half a mile from here, where they had taken you. This hut where you are now is fully seven miles from Barport."

"Seven miles!"

"Yes. The men who kidnaped you captured me first on my way home from the village of Brookville, where I went on business this afternoon. They are the same rascals who ran off with Daisy, and they owe me a grudge for saving her. They tied me to a stake, which is covered at high water, and I should have been drowned hours ago if it hadn't been for Madge here. She saved my life."

Ruby listened in astonishment to his story.

Then he told her how he came to re-enter the cave, and how he had carried her out of it in his arms all the way to the hut.

"How can I ever thank you enough for what you have done for me?" she said.

"It isn't necessary to thank me. I would risk my life any day for your sake."

She blushed vividly. Madge retired and left them to themselves.

"Mr. Nugent, I—"

"Do you care enough for me to call me Tom?" he asked, taking her hand. "You know I love you dearly, Ruby. If it is wrong for me to love you, tell me so. If there is no hope of winning you for my wife some day, let me know now. Better that I know my fate at once, even if the knowledge wrings my heart, than—than—"

Tom's voice died away in a tremulous flutter.

"Oh, Tom, I do love you with all my heart, and I will never marry any one but you," she said.

He caught her in his arms and kissed her several times. Then they sat there for more than an hour absorbed in their young love. By that time the first glow of daylight began to show itself in the eastern sky, for it was after four o'clock. Tom realized that they must be thinking of getting back to Barport. He called Madge and asked her if there was any other way of reaching the top of the cliffs except by way of the gully and the ravine.

"We can't go that way for those men are here, either in the cave or outside looking for this young lady, whose escape they will be aware of as soon as they wake up. As morning is coming on it is possible they are already awake," he said.

"There's a path outside this hut which will take you to the top," replied the gypsy seeress.

Tom said that the two rascals had possession of

the horse and buggy he had hired to drive to Brookville and back.

"The easiest way for us to reach town will be to walk to Brookville and hire a conveyance to take us over to the trolley line. On reaching the village I can put the constables of that place onto these rascals. I can telephone to the Barport police and give them all the facts, and also get into communication with your father, Ruby. I am afraid, however, that the villains will make their escape across the county somewhere in my rig, and thus baffle the police again."

It was quite light when Tom and Ruby started to make their way on foot to Brookville. He told her how disappointed he had been at failing to see her the last two times he called at her house. Then she blushingly explained the true reason why she had reluctantly evaded meeting him. He couldn't help catching her in his arms and kissing her several times after her confession. At that moment they heard the sound of wheels behind them, and looking back saw a buggy, with two men in it, rapidly approaching along the road. After one glance Tom grabbed her and pulled her toward the bushes.

"We must hide. Those are the men who kidnaped you, and who almost murdered me last night. It will not do for us to meet them."

CHAPTER XVII.—Conclusion.

The two rascals had already made them out, and though the young people were too far ahead to be recognized, the kidnapers believed that the girl was their late prisoner, and whipped up to overtake the pair. Tom dragged Ruby into the bushes, and there they crouched down, hoping they had not been seen. When the wagon dashed up and stopped almost in front of their place of concealment, and the men jumped out and ran toward the bushy screen that intervened, Tom knew that further hiding was useless.

So he drew the revolver he took from Smith, rose out of the bushes and confronted the scoundrels. Both of the crooks started back aghast on beholding his face. Presuming he was dead in the pool, they thought this was Tom's ghost.

"Throw up your hands, both of you, or I'll shoot," cried Tom, raising his arm out of the bushes and covering them with the muzzle of the revolver. Smith was unarmed, but Shackley clapped his right hand to his hip pocket and pulled out his gun. Tom wasn't taking any chances with the rascals, and the moment he saw the glint of the weapon he fired point blank at Shackley. The ruffian dropped the revolver, clapped both hands to his chest, and with a cry fell to the road.

"You'll get the same dose if you don't hold up your arms," said Tom to Smith.

The man overawed by the boy's determined manner, and the fate that had overtaken his associate, sulkily obeyed.

"Follow me, Ruby," said Tom, stepping into the road. "Pick up that revolver, cock it and point it at that fellow. If he makes the slightest move to escape, or to spring at you, fire at him. He is entitled to no consideration whatever."

Tom stepped over to the buggy to get the piece of rope he had seen lying under the seat.

"Now," he said, walking up to Smith, "drop your hands and put them behind your back. Do as I tell you," he added, threatening the rascal with his revolver. "After what you chaps did to me I'd just as soon shoot you as not."

The buggy was provided with a small extension back, and across this space Tom managed, with Ruby's help, to place the wounded and unconscious Shackley. Tom assisted Ruby on the seat, and after securing Smith so he couldn't get away, and would have to follow the vehicle on foot, the boy took his place beside the girl and started the horse toward Barport the houses became more frequent, and they met more people who stopped and stared at Smith tagging on foot behind the buggy because he couldn't help himself. Finally they reached the town, and Tom drove straight toward Judge Adams' house, followed by an increasing mob of the curious.

Just before Ruby's house was reached the crowd became so large that Tom had to pull his gun on the leaders and order them to keep back. The approach of the buggy and the crowd was noticed by the servants of the Adams' house, and the judge's attention called to it. The moment he saw the girl in the vehicle he surmised that it was his daughter, and rushed out of the house much excited. A couple of policemen came down a side street at this juncture, and the odd sight naturally attracted their attention. Tom stopped and beckoned them over.

"Keep the crowd away, will you, officers? I'm bringing Miss Adams home, and I have caught the two kidnapers. One of them is badly wounded, but I had to shoot him in self-defense."

The whole police force on duty had heard about the abduction of Ruby Adams the night before, and every detective in the city was out looking for her. The officers cut the crowd off, and Tom drove up to the gate in front of the Adams' residence just as the judge came running down the walk. A moment later Ruby was in his arms. Tom did not stop to make any explanation, leaving that for Ruby to do.

He drove straight for the police station, accompanied by the two policemen as a bodyguard. Tom had now acquired an undoubted reputation in town, and he was admitted to be a most uncommon young man. Nugent's hardware store was considered the place to deal at, and Tom was compelled to hire another salesman to help out Jones. His promptness and accuracy so pleased Bixby & Bachelor, that the contractors were willing to swear by him, and no one else could sell them hardware.

Tom now called once a week regularly on Ruby, and Mrs. Adams quickly saw that he and her daughter were deeply in love with each other. She told her husband, and they agreed that, as Tom was an uncommon fine young man, and was bound to make his mark in life, matters could take their course. In due time Shackley recovered from his wound and was placed on trial with Smith for the abduction of Daisy, and they were convicted and got fifteen years in the State prison. There still remained a bunch of indictments against them—the abduction of Ruby, the wounding of the four policemen, and the attempt on Tom's life. When they had served their present sentence they would

have to answer for one of the above, and the chances were they would spend the rest of their lives in prison. With the store an undoubted success, and secure in Ruby's love, Tom was the happiest boy in Barport. The future was golden with promise and fortune's favors, for the boy when it was put up to him proved that he was capable of running his father's business.

Next week's issue will contain "BACK NUMBER BIXBY; or, THE BOY WHO WAS UP TO THE MINUTE."

PARKING A MAN'S HAT ADDS TO ITS FIRST COST

In the long run, a man's hat costs more than a woman's. Thirty dollars seems an outrageous price for milady's Easter hat to her overworked husband. "I paid only \$5 for mine," he mutters. But that is the initial expense. Does the husband ever stop to think that almost every time he takes his hat off it costs him 10 cents?

A woman away from home never removes her head covering if she can help it, and when she does it never occurs to her to turn it over to careless hands. When a man stops in at the barber shop in the morning he is greeted with a solicitous, "I'll take your hat, sir." Into the willing palm drops a dime. At luncheon a cloak-room damsel smilingly lures his gray felt from his head and there goes another dime. Or if he lunches in an eating house of the type where signs on the wall bid him look out for his own hat, and he hangs it where he can see it, a voice at his elbow murmurs, as he rises from his pie and milk, "This is yours, isn't it, sir?" Of course, it is. He slips an extra nickel under the edge of his plate.

Perhaps he is of the gallant sort, and takes tea with his cousin, or some one else's cousin, at a fashionable hotel. The tea hour is over; he knows that he has never talked so well before: the soft strains of the music still reach his ear. Mellow of mood, he holds out one hand to receive his hat and thrusts the other into his pocket to seek for a quarter.

If he is dining out, the story repeats itself. Should the occasion be a banquet or a wedding requiring a high silk hat, the price of storage goes up in accordance. "Check your hat, sir?" is the expensive refrain he hears from morning until midnight, whether he is on business or on pleasure bent. There is the girl at the theatre, the boy at the club and the porter on the train. To cite all of the places where parking a hat costs a dime would be to reveal the life history of modern man.



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TRUTHFUL JAMES

or

The Boy Who Would Not Drink

By GASTON GARNE

(A Serial Story.)

CHAPTER XVI.—(Continued)

It was then that several of George's friends tried to interfere.

"Back! Back, gentlemen!" cried the town marshal. "Every one of you are under arrest for bringing about this fight. I'll take my time, though, in calling on you and taking you to the lock-up."

That frightened the young fellows, and they all took to their heels.

At the same time Jimmy was shouldering George, groaning as he was with pain at his dislocated jaw.

"What are you going to do with him, Jimmy?" the marshal asked.

"Why, I'm going to take him back to the lock-up."

"Good! I'll see you through," and he followed Jimmy as he hurried toward the station with George on his shoulder, who was entirely helpless as his hands were tied behind his back, while his jaw was giving him intolerable pain.

In a few minutes he was again in the lockup, but quite sober from the intense pain that he was suffering. The marshal ran for a doctor, knowing that George's father was well able to pay his bills, hurried to the lockup and soon forced the dislocated jaw into its socket.

The first thing that George said when he could speak was:

"Jimmy Watson, I'll kill you yet!"

"Do you hear that threat, doctor?" Jimmy coolly asked.

"Yes; but he is very angry now and doesn't know what he is saying."

"All right. We'll let somebody else judge as to whether he does know what he is saying or not," and with that Jimmy turned to the town marshal and said:

"Sir, will you make the charge against George of attacking me violently and forcing me to defend myself?"

"Yes, Jimmy; go on home and you'll find George here in the morning."

Jimmy and his friends then went to the wagon, hitched up the horse and drove out of town.

Mr. Williams had already gone, having paid Squire Huckberry for his services, and not until he reached home did he learn that his son had taken part in a second fight with Jimmy Watson, with the result that George was again locked up. He had just told his wife that he had to pay a fine of twenty-five dollars for George's unwarranted attack on Jimmy, when a messenger came to him and reported that George was again in the lockup, having a second time attacked Jimmy, who knocked his jaw out of joint so that a physician had to reset it.

George's mother burst into tears and asked her

husband why he had not taken care of her boy.

Pretty soon another messenger rode up, bearing a note from Squire Huckberry asking whether he should give bail for George.

Mr. Williams immediately sat down and wrote a note to the lawyer, to be taken back by the messenger, that if he gave bond for his son he would have to make it good himself, as he would not more spend another cent for the defense of the wicked boy.

"I have worked hard," he added, "for my money and don't propose to waste it on drunken boys, if they are my own."

That night the town marshal went prowling around the town for young fellows who had witnessed the fight and encouraged it to notify them to appear in court the next morning and pay any fine the judge might impose upon them.

Some of them were youths under age. Others were young men who were of legal age and who knew that they would either have to pay a fine or prove in a satisfactory manner to the judge that they were not there designedly.

The next morning there was another crowd of excited citizens in the village court-house. Jimmy and a few of his friends came in. Sally Holmes and Mrs. Watson were also among the number, having come in to town in Jimmy's buggy, while Jimmy and his boy friends drove in with the Jersey wagon.

Lawyer Johnson met Jimmy and asked him if he should represent him the second time.

"Yes, Mr. Johnson. If I need any representative at all in the court-room, why, I want you to be that man."

"All right, Jimmy. Don't worry. I have picked up all the facts in the case, and you need not worry at all about the expense. The marshal tells me that there is no charge against you, as he was a witness of a part of the fight and will swear that you were simply acting on the defensive and were, therefore, not to blame."

The young lawyer was making much capital out of the cases, and was satisfied to do the work free of charge.

One of George's friends came to Jimmy and asked him what he was going to do with George.

"Not a thing. He is in the hands of the law. I only acted in self-defense and will simply tell my story to the judge."

"Well, what in thunder did you take him back to the station-house for?"

"Where else should I have taken him?" Jimmy asked.

"Why, you could have turned him over to his friends."

"Nonsense! His friends were present and encouraging him to break my neck for me, and I understand that they have almost to a man been notified to appear before the judge and pay such fines as he may see fit to impose upon them."

"Well, if George were a boy of mine," retorted George's friend, "I'd break your neck for you."

"I guess you would find that a rather tough job, Mr. Brown," retorted Jimmy.

"Well, I've handled hogs a good deal and know just how to swing them around."

Jimmy knew that Brown was a strong man and a dangerous one to tackle, so, without saying anything more, he turned and walked away.

Brown looked after him, shook his head, went

into a grog shop and imbibed two or three drinks of fiery liquor.

Some of Jimmy's friends reported to him that Brown was using threatening language toward him and that he had better look out.

"All right," said Jimmy. "I am on the lookout all the time. I don't want any trouble with Mr. Brown because he is a much stronger man than I, and I have always regarded him as a dangerous man."

"Here, Jimmy," said one of his friends, "you take my stick until I ask you for it," and the young man placed an exceedingly strong hickory cane in Jimmy's hand, saying:

"Use it if necessary. There is no danger of its going to pieces when used on a man's head," and with that the friend went away, leaving his powerful stick in Jimmy's hand.

CHAPTER XVII

How One Trouble Followed Another

Jimmy looked at the cane which his friend had left in his hand rather admiringly and remarked:

"It's a pretty solid weapon. I hope I won't have to crack any man's head with it."

Then Jimmy walked around to where his mother and Sally Holmes had stopped and helped them out of the buggy, then hitching the horse to a hitching-post.

"Why, Jimmy," said Sally, "what in the world are you doing with Mr. Emmonds' walking-cane?"

"He lent it to me to use if I should have need of it," said Jimmy, with a broad smile on his face.

"Well, that's kind of him," said Sally. "But are you expecting any trouble, Jimmy?"

"No, I am not; but Mr. Emmonds said I might need it and was welcome to use it, if necessary, in self-defense. He said that Farmer Brown was filling up on mean whisky and threatening all sorts of things toward me. He knows and so does everybody else that Brown is a very strong man and a bad one when he gets full of whisky."

"Yes, indeed; but what in the world has he got against you, Jimmy?"

"Nothing, personally, that I am aware of; but he is a friend of George's father, and is one of those kind of men that, when he gets a few drinks of whisky on board, wants to lick somebody. If a circus should come along when he is full, why, he would just as soon tackle the elephant as not. Mother has gone into that store over there. Shall we join her?"

"Yes. She's going to do a little shopping, I believe, and I guess she would like to have us with her," and she took Jimmy's arm, and they walked a little distance along the sidewalk to the store and entered it, as Mrs. Watson had done.

Some young men on the piazza in front of the store beckoned to Jimmy, who, after seeing Sally meet his mother inside, immediately turned and joined them.

They were talking together on the piazza of the store when Farmer Brown, a powerful and dangerous man when full of liquor, came by, and, seeing Jimmy and noticing the heavy hickory stick he was carrying, muttered:

"Oh, you are armed, eh?" more to himself than to any one else, and then he turned and walked in an opposite direction to where his wagon was standing with his horses hitched to the wheel.

He seemed to be looking for something in the wagon, and in a little while was seen to pick up a stout stick about the size of the one which Emmonds had left with Jimmy and come straight toward the store where Jimmy and his friends were standing, talking and laughing.

"Jimmy," said one of the boys, "look out. Brown is coming with a big stick about like yours in his hand."

Jimmy turned and looked in the direction from whence Brown was coming and saw that he was in for it, and that it was to be a stick fight.

He was not particularly proficient in the science of fencing; but he believed that he knew as much about it as did Brown, so he braced himself up for what might follow.

Brown came straight toward him, and the young men standing near got out of the way.

"Here you are, Jimmy," said Brown.

"I see," he added, "that you have a good stick in your hand, but so have I."

"Mr. Brown," said Jimmy, "you have no cause whatever to attack me. I have done you no harm whatever in my life, and you have no cause to do me any mischief," and Jimmy stepped back two paces as if to avoid coming on contact with him.

"Stand your ground, you young whelp!" yelled Brown, aiming a terrific blow at Jimmy's head with the heavy hickory stick.

Quick as a flash Jimmy threw up his cane and warded off the blow. Brown's cane slipped down Jimmy's without touching the latter. As Brown's cane slipped off of Jimmy's, the cane of the latter was left free, and Jimmy quickly gave it a whirl and landed it on Brown's head with tremendous force. Down went the farmer as though he had been shot.

When parties ran to him to lift him up he was as limp as if already dead.

Quite a crowd gathered around him almost instantly. People ran out of the stores, and everybody had something to say, either asking questions or making comments.

Mrs. Watson ran out of the store and stood on the piazza and heard from some of the boys that Jimmy had knocked Farmer Brown senseless and that his friends had taken charge of him.

She looked around for Jimmy and found him standing, leaning on Emmonds' cane, as if waiting for the consequences. She ran up to him and asked:

"Jimmy, what have you done?"

"Simply defended myself as usual, mother. Brown is drunk and attacked me with that stick of his which is as big and as heavy as this one I have in my hand. I warded off the blow and gave him one in return that struck him squarely on the head and caused him to fall."

"Yes," said a bystander to Mrs. Watson. "I saw it myself and no one can blame him for it."

"Jimmy," said his mother, "hitch up right away and we'll go back home."

"No, mother. I'm not going to retreat, but I shall stay right here and let them see that I am not afraid of them."

(To be continued.)

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INTERESTING ARTICLES

A CHAPEL OF SALT BUILT SIX CENTURIES AGO

Latvia boasts the only salt chapel in the world. Deep down beneath the earth's surface, in a salt mine, some unknown sculptors about six centuries ago carved out of the rock salt a place of worship, complete with figures of Virgin and saints. It remains intact to this day. The visitor tries to visualize the sparkling beauty of this unique altar could a ray of the sun but touch the crystals.

DOCTOR PRAISES SEA-LIONS

Dr. Charmoille, an X-ray specialist of Belfort, France, has been reported in numerous interviews in Paris papers as extolling the "almost, if not quite, human intelligence of the sea-lion." The views of the physician are based on his professional treatment of one of the amphibians.

There may, of course, be nothing remarkable about the case from a zoological point of view, but the doctor believes he has had a unique experience and the comments in the papers show that many people agree with him.

JAZZ DANCES "DANGEROUS SPORTS," SAYS DOCTOR

A Paris physician writing in the *Comedia* of the City of Light, a periodical devoted to the elevation of the song and dance, condemns the Charleston and Black Bottom from a new point of view. Although exception has been taken to these dances on esthetic, moral and physical grounds, the doctor goes into detail in condemning them for the last-mentioned reason.

He writes that the examination of several cases has proved that the violent strain these dances impose upon certain ligaments might almost cause them to be tabulated as "dangerous sports." The knee, he says, is especially liable to injury in these more strenuous performances, principally because they demand of it movements for which it is not fitted from the mechanical standpoint.

"The knee," he points out, "is a one-way joint, rather like a hinge in the center of the lever formed by the upper and lower leg, and is adapted really only to allow the leg to be bent backward from the centre. Certain modern dances, however, demand attempts to bend it sideways and thus create serious risks of dislocation or sprain."

"Dancing already imposes quite a sufficient strain on the knee and ankle, even when movements are made in a perfectly natural direction, and any increase of this strain by unnatural or gymnastic movements may have painful consequences."

Statistics dealing with cases of sprain or dislocation caused through athletic sports or dancing, which have come under this doctor's notice, show that there were 5,000 sprained or dislocated knees, as against only 2,000 sprained ankles, and among the former was a goodly number of what the writer termed "the Charleston knee."

HIGH AIR ROUTE TO EUROPE PROPOSED TO EVADE STORMS

A regular transatlantic flying service that would not be at the mercy of bad weather is envisaged in connection with the experiments proceeding in Germany for the perfection of a plane capable of flying at an altitude of from 30,000 to 40,000 feet at a maximum speed of 300 miles an hour.

A machine starting out for Paris from New York would fly by way of Boston and Halifax to a point in Newfoundland. At all times during this 1,000-mile journey the plane—an ordinary land machine—would be in touch with emergency landing fields, and the trip would be no more hazardous than flying to Chicago at present. In Newfoundland passengers, mail, etc., would be transferred to a high altitude, ocean-going air liner.

It is argued that the next stage of the flight—across the Atlantic by the northern route—would not only fly above any bad weather that could possibly form, but would make the distance in a far shorter time than is at present possible by a machine flying at a lower altitude. This is accounted for by the higher speed which it is hoped to attain by flying at high altitudes in rarefied atmosphere. It is also held that the time used in ascending to 30,000 or 40,000 feet would be more than compensated for by the saving made possible by the increased speed.

After completing the 1,900 miles of ocean crossing, the high altitude plane would descend in Ireland, whence passengers would be flown in land planes via London to any part of the Continent.

The first test planes, made entirely of metal, are small in proportion to the huge high altitude air liners for the proposed transatlantic service. In the body of these planes is a sealed cabin, comfortably furnished, for the passengers. A blower system is provided to supply oxygen when rarefied air is reached and is operated in conjunction with the heating and ventilation systems. The engines are equipped with superchargers designed to maintain maximum fuel power at all altitudes.

A Skillful Job

"Well, Clark, thanks to you, I've got my fellow safely caged. But for your hearty assistance I'm afraid I'd have had a nasty time of it if I hadn't been compelled to go back empty-handed."

The speaker was Joe Bloodgood, an English detective, who had come to New York in search of a noted criminal. I had joined in with him, and by my assistance, as he acknowledged by his words, the fugitive had been taken into custody.

He was then under lock and key, and Joe was waiting to get extradition papers. And while waiting he was my guest.

It was in the dead of winter.

We sat before a glowing fire, each with a good cigar between his teeth; between us was a small table, and on it a bowl of punch, which Joe had brewed in regular English style.

And then, as we sipped, we began to talk of professional matters, and began comparing crimes and criminals of England and America.

"We have more crimes in high life than you have in this country," said Joe, finally.

"Why so?" I inquired.

"Well, our laws of inheritance are at the bottom of it. By our laws you know the eldest son is nearly always the sole heir; or, failing that, the nearest male relation, in most cases. Supposing that the life of only one being stands between you and a big estate and lots of 'tin,' and you are a poor devil often going hungry—don't you see how great a temptation there is?"

"Yes," I assented. "By the way, did you ever get mixed up in such an affair?"

"Several of them. But there was that case of Durand Manor—that was the tough case. But I got to the bottom of it, and it was what I call a 'Skillful Job.'"

"Let's hear about it."

JOE'S STORY.

Durand Manor, a very old and valuable estate, had descended through many generations of the Durands.

It was entailed in the direct line, the eldest son becoming the heir.

Old Sir Lemuel, at his death, left behind him two sons—Robert, the heir and James; the former twenty-two, the latter twenty years of age. Now, as is apparent, in the case of Robert's death without leaving a son behind him, James succeeded his brother.

Having premised to this extent, I will now return to a day in early spring, as I sat in the office at our headquarters. It chanced that I was alone. The door softly opened, and, on turning to see who it was, I beheld the figure of a deeply-veiled, exquisitely-shaped woman.

"Are you a detective?" she finally asked, in the sweetest and saddest tone I ever heard.

"I am; can I do anything for you?"

"Can I trust you?"

"You can rely upon my honesty and sense of honor," I replied.

"And will it be necessary that every one here should know it?" she hesitatingly asked.

"Not if you will meet me elsewhere and tell me privately what you have to say."

"My carriage is outside," struck by a sudden inspiration. "I can talk to you while driving."

"The very thing. Return to your carriage, and I will be down in a few minutes."

What was my surprise, when I reached the sidewalk, to find myself confronted by a carriage bearing a crest. The lady evidently was a person of rank. I hesitated about entering the carriage, but she motioned me imperatively to do so. For some little time we rode in silence.

"Are you a married man?" she finally abruptly asked.

"I am."

"And love your wife?"

"I do."

"Singular question, you may think," she said, "but I ask them because I am called upon now to bare the secret of my own heart to you. I am Lady Templeton."

I bowed low.

"Robert Durand and I have been friends for years," she resumed. "At last we were more—we were lovers. The knowledge was kept from my family. A month ago Robert Durand and I met; he was to come again two days later, but he did not come. Instead, I heard that he had suddenly become insane—but I do not believe it."

"Ah! And what am I to do in the matter, Lady Templeton?"

"Find means to prove that he is not," she promptly returned.

"Do you suspect anybody? In other words, do you think his brother James is at the bottom of it?"

"I tell you that Robert is the victim of a conspiracy," she finally said. "Will you try to get to the bottom of it?"

Perhaps her absolute faith in the truth of what she said impressed me. And before I knew fairly what I was about I had committed myself, and had agreed to attempt to prove—in the face of half a dozen eminent physicians—that Robert Durand was not insane.

Well, half an hour afterwards I was calling myself a fool, a donkey, a blockhead, and a score of other equally uncomplimentary names, for, in addition to feeling that I had set about a useless task I did not know but I might get my head within the lion's jaws and have it snapped off.

I left London and went down to Durand Manor.

In view of the fact that Robert was pronounced hopelessly insane, making it sure that James would succeed to the estate, the father of Lucy Darrel had withdrawn all objection, and the night that I reached the Manor, James and Lucy were married.

I had stolen into the grounds and hidden among some shrubbery. I gazed in upon the scene of festivity. In the midst of it a wild and fearful shriek arose above all other sounds.

It was uttered by the mad brother confined in an unused wing of the building.

It's intonation killed any doubt I might have had concerning Robert's insanity.

Then a carriage rolled up to the door. In a few minutes the bridal couple would leave on their way to the train and their tour.

I was about to move out of the shrubbery, and return to the inn at the village, when I was caused to pause by the near approach of two men.

"Treat him kindly. Poor Bob! Use no harsh measures with him."

It was James Durand. What, he, the wicked man Lady Templeton suspected him of being, and speak so kindly of his unfortunate brother? It was a sin and a shame to even dream that such a thing were possible.

Ten minutes later the carriage rolled swiftly away, and I returned toward the village in a deep study. The conversation I had heard did not exactly please me. I determined to get a glimpse of the attendant by daylight.

I did so the next day, and his appearance impressed me any way but favorably. I managed to obtain the information that his name was Thomson, that he was a professional attendant for the insane, and had been attached to some insane asylum near London.

Back to London I went, and my opinion of Thomson was not raised when I discovered the particular insane asylum to which he had been attached. It was a private institution, and it had long borne a bad name.

Once more I went to Durand Manor.

"That's a cousin of the Durands," said the landlord, as a young lady drove past in a basket phaeton. "She's playing lady up at the manor house until the heir comes back with his bride."

In the afternoon, after dinner, I strolled away toward the manor house, as all the villagers called it. The "outside grounds," as they were called, everybody was permitted to visit, strangers being supposed, however, not to pass the huge stone portals of the gates a short distance from the house.

I had nearly reached the gates when I heard the rapid fall of a horse's feet approaching from behind me. Glancing back, I saw a lady on horseback, dressed in long riding habit and high hat.

"Do you belong here?" she demanded, as she reined in her horse on reaching my side.

"I do not."

"Well, no matter. Here, hold my horse—I will alight just within the gates."

"Ah!"

I glanced quickly around, and saw the young lady whom the landlord had said was Durand's cousin.

A look of something like jealousy set into the equestrienne's dark eyes. One moment she seemed to hesitate, and then she swiftly advanced toward the lady of the manor.

"Who are you?"

"Excuse me, but who are you who enter these grounds in this manner?" having recovered her self-possession.

"No matter who I am," was the brisk reply. "Are you anything to James Durand?"

"I am his cousin."

"Where is James Durand?"

"He is absent on his wedding tour," was the reply.

The equestrienne reeled and almost fell. But

she recovered herself, and with steady step returned to where I stood, and I assisted her into the saddle. Her teeth were clutched, her eyes flamed, and, as she rode away, I heard her mutter:

"When he did not come, I knew there was another woman in the case. So he has deserted me. Fool! I know his plans, and will be revenged!"

I traced her to London, and there lost track of her. A month had passed, all but one day. In this time I had become convinced that James Durand was a villain, that he had paid Thomson to become his brother's executioner. But what could I do?

Gloomy-minded and despondent, I wandered through Hyde Park, and suddenly came face to face with the woman I had searched for in vain. Where skill had failed, accident had befriended me.

I spoke to her. At first she seemed inclined to resent it as a familiarity, but I uttered the name of James Durand, and found it talismanic.

"Yes, it is true!" she said, with her eyes flashing. "Sit down here, where we cannot be overheard. Listen! I was an actress, but pure in life as a babe. James Durand saw me—loved me—he said, and heaven knows I loved him. There is no need of telling you the story—it is sufficient that I loved him so blindly that I let him sink me until all sense of shame and degradation was lost."

"He told me about how he could become the heir if he could get his brother out of the way."

"Give him drugs—make him mad," I told James. Robert Durand was drugged—made mad. He was examined while under the influence of these drugs, and the doctors said he was insane.

"No sooner does James Durand come into possession, or know that he is sure of succeeding, than he deserts me."

With my kisses warm on his lips he plighted his troth with another woman, and the hour that I learned it my heart was filled with wormwood and gall. The love I bore him is now changed into deathly hate; I have sworn to be revenged. He will cause Robert's death, I know, and then—then—I will put the halter around his neck."

To a passing "bobby" I gave a glimpse of my shield. He advanced and we conveyed the woman to the lockup. She repeated her story to a magistrate, and, armed with a warrant, I went to the manor house.

I arrested Thomson and released Robert Durand. To all appearances he was mad, but when the effects of the drugs had passed off he was as sane as either of us.

I laid my plans to capture James Durand when he stepped foot in England. To avoid a scandal and a blemish on the name, his brother must have written to him, exposing the failure of his dastardly scheme, for James Durand took a vessel at Havre and came to America, and was killed afterward, I have heard, on the plains.

The actress killed herself when she found that James Durand had escaped.

As for Robert and Lady Templeton, they were finally married. That I was handsomely paid, you can well imagine. The case being kept so quiet, I got no particular credit for it, though it was a skillful job.

BRIEF BUT POINTED

SIGNAL SYSTEM IN BROOKLYN

A method of broadcasting alarms to all police precincts in Brooklyn by means of teletype machines now used in Manhattan will be put in operation soon. The machines are electrically operated and duplicate in each precinct messages sent from a central machine at Police Headquarters. The machines were installed by the New York Telephone Company.

MUSEUM FOR OLD SWEDISH DESIGNS

What Henry Ford has started at Sudbury, Mass., the Nordic Museum in Stockholm, Sweden, has been enabled to establish on a more extensive scale by the acquisition of part of the capital's large natural park, Djurgarden. To this outdoor department of the museum are being moved numerous buildings and entire farmyards in order to preserve specimens of design that modern industrial technique tends to drive from practical life.

Industrial producers have found it desirable and feasible to make use of the traditional forms of craftsmanship, examples of which are there assembled, in iron, wood, glass, textiles and in general construction.

FACES OF LIVING MEN CARVED ON LONDON CHEMICAL BUILDING

Faces of living men are carved in stone on the new million-pound building of the Imperial Chemical Industries nearing completion at Westminster.

One of the faces is that of the head of the concern, Sir Alfred Mond. All the other carvings are said to be excellent likenesses of many men prominent in the chemical world.

The sculpture around the building also includes figures of peacocks, which are said to be there as a symbol of incorruptibility, following the ancient tradition that the flesh of the peacock is incorruptible.

FOE OF MUSCLE SHOALS HITS AT U. S. IN BUSINESS

The National Fertilizer Association issued a statement recently charging members of Congress with "trading votes by the wholesale" for political reasons. Charles J. Brand, former chief of the Bureau of Markets of the United States Department of Agriculture, now Secretary of the association, made the assertion.

"Few citizens realize the extent of which our Government is rapidly being plunged into private business by four-cornered vote trading," said Mr. Brand.

Brand pointed out that large blocks of votes are being traded on the Flood Control, Boulder Dam, Farm Relief and Muscle Shoals bills.

PEKING "TEMPLE OF HEAVEN" NOW A MILITARY STOREHOUSE

The Temple of Heaven, whose three-tiered dome of blue is one of the old capital's crowning glories and the first landmark to greet the trav-

eler coming to Peking from the seacoast, has been converted to a military storehouse.

On the plea of military necessity the temple enclosure, with its great white marble altar, on which the emperors for hundreds of years made the annual New Year sacrifices, has been closed to the general public.

Until recently the temple itself was filled with explosives and ammunition for Marshal Chang Tso-lin's armies, so that a careless soldier's cigarette or an enemy's match might have destroyed what is generally considered the highest triumph of Chinese architecture. These stores have been moved to the Hall of Abstinence.

NEW WEAPONS ARE ENLISTED IN THE WAR ON MOSQUITOS

Armed with a formidable array of weapons, health authorities in many parts of the country have launched their annual offensive against mosquitos. Poison gases, deadly acids and powders, oil, fish and birds are among the means employed for their extermination. Federal and State Governments will spend upward of \$100,000,000 in the work.

Airplane dusting has proved efficacious and economical and will be tried on an extensive scale. A plane specially equipped for the purpose flies low over a mosquito swamp, spreading a paris green mixture or oil. This method has been found to destroy from 80 to 99 per cent. of the larvae in the swamps treated, and is cheaper and quicker than the old-fashioned hand spraying.

The use of oil to treat breeding places has proved valuable in many cases, especially to check the spread of the pest when heavy rains have made small ponds and pools of stagnant water.

The natural enemies that are also employed include many varieties of birds, bats, spiders, lizards and frogs, as well as many insects and plants. Dragon flies are among the greatest feeders on mosquito larvae. The bladderworts, plants living in marshes, have small bladders for trapping the larvae. One of the water ferns, known as Azolia caroliniana, is deadly to mosquitos, according to the curator of the Brooklyn Botanical Garden.

Goldfish, minnows and others of their tribe devour enormous quantities of mosquito larvae. For this reason scientists have urged the propagation of them in waters that remain stagnant.

The State of New Jersey, for decades afflicted by the pest, is taking radical steps. Its Mosquito Extermination Society devotes thousands of dollars yearly to complete the work of stamping out the insect in the undrained salt marshes. The radio and motion pictures are used each Spring to disseminate information to householders as to how to rid their premises of mosquitoes. The 50,000 members of the New Jersey Federation of Women's Clubs and the school children and Boy Scouts of the State are pledged to wage a vigorous campaign.

CURRENT NEWS

CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL TO RICKENBACKER URGED

Three Representatives and one Senator have prepared bills proposing the award of the Congressional Medal of Honor to Capt. Edward V. Rickenbacker, American aviation ace during the World War.

Rickenbacker was officially credited with shooting down twenty-five German airplanes and observation balloons, and was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross with seven oakleaves.

SHAKEDOWNS SQUEEZED BOOTLEGGER TO WALL

A bootlegger announced his resignation to his patrons in the 40th Ward recently, declaring he has been driven to the wall by the shakedown of the politicians. He said the political squeeze pinches all the profits and puts business into the red. The last straw, he remarked, was a batch of tickets he had to buy to a smoker of the South End Athletic Club, two of which he enclosed in a letter to the Tribune narrating his experiences. In closing his letter, the bootlegger says:

"Note I have cut the numbers of the tickets out so that I won't have a pineapple thrown at my home."

RUM RUNNERS AWARDED INSURANCE ON CARGO

Insurance companies may be liable for losses when rum-running ships off the American coasts are captured.

The French Supreme Court has so ruled in the case of a French ship captured just outside the territorial waters of the United States and relieved of his cargo of wines and liquors.

The insurance company refused to reimburse the cargo owners on the ground that they had engaged in a prohibited commerce. The Supreme Court ruled that as the ship cleared only "toward" America and not "to" an American port there was nothing illegal about the voyage and ordered the insurance company to pay the losses.

LARGEST HIGH SCHOOL IS IN OKLAHOMA CITY

The largest junior high school in the United States is, according to the National Education Association of Superintendents, Roosevelt Junior High School in Oklahoma City.

The school building has, in addition to the usual class rooms, a cafeteria, a large gymnasium and laboratories for special work. At the end of every lunch hour there is presented in the cafeteria a motion picture which is usually a news or sport reel or an educational feature. The school is governed by a student council composed of forty-four representatives elected by popular vote.

GAME WAS CHEAP IN EARLY DAYS

About the year 1700 New York sportsmen did not have to visit the woods of Maine and New Hampshire to bag a deer. These animals were abundant near by and worth little. It is recorded that at Albany the Indians were only too willing

to sell a stag for a cheap jackknife or a few iron nails. In Winter the deer came out of the forests and fed from the hog pens of Albany swine. In New York City in 1701 a number of shops sold a quarter of venison for ninepence.

The Indians contributed to the first Massachusetts Thanksgiving feast by bringing the Colonists half a dozen plump deer. This was in 1621, when not only deer but wild turkeys were abundant. The pioneer colonists found turkeys in flocks of hundreds. Fifty-pounders were not uncommon. Thirty-pound turkeys brought only a shilling apiece.

WINDMILL IS THE VICTIM OF MACHINE PROGRESS

The picturesque windmill which has lent charm to so many foreign landscapes is gradually giving way to the more modern methods of power generation. The two factors playing the most important part in its displacement are the development of hydroelectric power and the increasing use of the internal combustion engine.

In Europe, Germany is the largest present-day maker and user of windmills. Wind-driven electric generators are now made by the Germans. They are equipped with storage batteries for supplying current for various machines. Holland, the country with which the windmill has been for centuries associated, is gradually discarding this method of power production for the modern electric power pump.

NAVY MAKES THE MUSICIANS FOR THE BANDS OF ITS SHIPS

When the United States Navy founded its Musicians' School at Hampton Roads, Va., it inaugurated a definite policy for the development of its musical branch. The World War was largely responsible for the changes in the music of the navy, as well as for establishing the fact that good music is a great aid to the morals of men in peace and war.

The primary purpose of the school is to give to the student the rudiments of a musical education as a firm foundation for his work in the navy. A finished musician cannot be turned out in eight months, which is the time allowed to a student at the Navy Musicians' School, but it gives the ambitious pupil a chance to master many artistic difficulties and the necessary knowledge to go ahead with his studies.

The school was organized in 1919. A few competent men were carefully chosen to form the staff of instructors, and the sacrifice of many leisure hours by the students and their determination to make the most of the opportunity have placed the Navy Musicians' School on a high plane.

The beginner in the school is taught rules of harmony and theory, the particular requirements of each instrument, and transposition, which is necessary to a man desiring to become a band leader. The instruments studied are the violin, viola, 'cello, string bass and piano, as well as all the wind instruments.

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